

Highland Herald

INTERIM UPDATE

Friends,

It has been a little over 15 months since Rev. Jim Rausch left. I'm completing my first year with you at the end of November. I imagine that, for some of you, this time between pastors has seemed like an eternity. For others of us, time just seems to fly.

During this interim time, we have not stood still — just waiting for a new pastor to come. No, we've continued to follow the Spirit's lead. We've installed an art exhibit in our hallways. We've launched a new website and put out a new sign. We've adopted a new mission statement and expanded the taglines that define who we are. We've joined with the Mom's Swap group in new ways and engaged our community in walkabouts, the CROP Walk, VBS, the Supper House, the Glenside Halloween Bash, and more. We've continued to grow in our faith in worship, Bible study, prayer, service, and the Book Discussion Group. We've continued our vital work to help address hunger in our world. We've continued to explore ways of worshiping with both traditional and more contemporary music. We continue to care for each other and take care of the myriad of details that keep a church going. I couldn't be prouder to walk with you as we continue to listen for how God is leading us.

Your PNC is still hard at work. That's all we know at this point. As they come close to selecting a candidate to present to us, we will keep you informed. This is time consuming, exciting, and challenging work they have taken on. Please hold them and our new pastor in your prayers.

Grace and peace,

Laurie



*“The light shines in the darkness ...” – John 1:4
 “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that.”*

– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Dear friends,

On the fall morning when I wrote this “Pastor’s Corner,” I was thinking about how the shorter days and grayer skies of Michigan winters are upon us.

Then I noticed our cat. Our crazy, sometimes wild, oftentimes fear-full cat, Harpo. No matter how gray it is outside, if there is a sliver of light coming through any window in our house, Harpo will find it and luxuriate in it. Like most cats, Harpo is always on the lookout for the light. He can find the light coming through on the grayest and most cloud-filled days. And when he finds the light, he parks there for a while – soaking in the light.

I don’t know about you, but these days the darkness in our world can often feel overwhelming. The meanness and violence in our national political environment are profoundly distressing and have many of us concerned about the future of our democracy. There are so many problems: censorship, the rolling back of rights for marginalized people, the hate speech on social media, inflation and people struggling to make ends meet, the decline of many of our churches, systemic racism and injustice that just won’t budge, and so many more problems. Yes, there are times when the darkness hangs over us like a storm cloud ready to burst open.

And in our individual lives, too, darkness sometimes seems to have the final word. Illness, loss of people we love, job struggles, worry about our children and grandchildren, worry about making ends meet and if those we love will get a fair shake. Yes, there is plenty of heavy grayness to go around these days.

But amid all of that, we who want to follow Jesus remember those powerful words from John’s Gospel: “Jesus is the light, and the light shines in the darkness. . . .” So maybe part of our job in these days, when darkness seems to be winning, is to be like cats. Let’s keep our eyes peeled for any sliver of light we can find! Let’s keep looking for and pointing out the light! Let’s hang out in the light so it can fill our souls.

Where can we find the light? I know you will find some slivers of light at church right now among the faithful folk who lead our hunger initiatives. You may find slivers of light in our Moms Group that keeps offering hope and resources to some of the more needy families in our community. Light is pouring into the hallways of our church through the art displays. The steady work of people who keep our operations and building going are shedding rays of light that we may forget to recognize. And what about the group that shared fun and laughter at the Glenside Halloween event? Yes, light indeed!

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You may see rays of light in our community when a person kindly holds the doors open for another at a store or someone says a kind word to a person in a checkout lane. You may see the light as you spend time watching the power of Lake Michigan or see a flock of geese in formation heading south. The light can warm us in a myriad of ways. The light could be a daily time of prayer, the words of a poet, a song of praise, the taste of a sweet frosting-covered cookie, the hug of your loved one, a special dinner or cup of coffee with a friend, the joy of a child who lost a tooth. Friends, our lives are full of slivers and swaths of light. It is in the light where our souls can be nourished. And as we soak up the light, by God's grace, we can then be filled with what we need to live with hope.

Now let's remember that we who follow Christ are not invited to live in the light alone. We are also invited into the darkness. Jesus left the light of heaven to be with us, and we are also called to show up wherever there is pain and suffering in this world. We who follow Christ are often invited to bring the light to the darkest places in our world. Yes, often we are those slivers of light! When I have the grace to soak up the light, I more readily can be filled with love in darker times. And as we learn to spot the light, we may be surprised that the brightest things show up in the places we least expect them.

So, as the grayness of winter approaches, let's be like cats. Let's train our souls to be on the lookout for the light – in our homes, our church and our community, remembering that sometimes the light shows up in places we least expect. And when we see it, let's make a beeline for it! Let's soak it in for a while and bring it with us into the world, rejoicing and giving thanks.

With gratitude,

Laurie



Prayer Shawl Ministry—Tuesday, December 6, 2022 11:30 am in the Youth Room

Come join us and knit a shawl for another person in our community who deserves to be "wrapped in love." We can provide knitting instruction and listen to what you have to teach us.

The faithful knitters are Julie , Joan , Ruth , Dona , Betty , Pam , Carol , Sue , and Ellen .





Mission Box for December 2022 – LOVE INC

Thank you for your generous donations. Hope the new location of the Mission Boxes, at the Wickham entrance, is more convenient for you.

Love INC (in the name of Christ), located in Muskegon Township, appreciates FPC's support for their ministry. Your donations help vulnerable people in our community with basic needs and encourages their self-sufficiency.

These are the most recent food needs of LOVE INC:

- Canned meats and hamburger
- Tuna and tuna helpers
- Canned vegetables, fruits, juice
- Cereal, pancake mix, syrup
- Peanut butter, jelly
- Chunky soup, crackers
- Flavored rice, instant oatmeal
- Spaghetti sauce and noodles

Personal care items requested include the following:

- Deodorant, hand lotion, hand soap
- Tissues, feminine hygiene products
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- Shampoo, hair conditioner
- Hand soap and shaving products



Thanks again to our chefs who prepared dinner for four homeless families, including a grandma, staying at Family Promise. These chefs were Robin , Sue , Jean , Larry , Kristi , Darlene and Mitzi . If you would like to provide a dinner the week of January 1, 2023, please call Mitzi. at (231) 327-5827.

What is Bread for the World and Cents-Ability?

The first Sunday of the month, from September to October, The Mission Council sponsors fund-raising activities for Bread for the World and Cents-Ability Offering. Donations and purchases at a BFW bake sale and collected in Cents-Ability baskets and quarter rolls have been part of this church's mission efforts for almost 40 years.



The funds raised through Cents-Ability support feeding ministries in the Muskegon community, including sponsoring two Feeding America food trucks each year and contributing funds to Supper House and First Congregational Church's Saturday breakfast program.

Bread for the World bake sales in the chapel help fund this advocacy group based in Washington DC, whose mission statement reads: "Bread for the World is a Christian advocacy organization urging U.S. decision makers to do all they can to pursue a world without hunger. Our mission is to educate and equip people to advocate for policies and programs that can help end hunger in the U.S. and around the world." <https://www.bread.org/about/>

Ministers from First Presbyterian Church of Muskegon have led our involvement in Bread for the World. Rev. Don Mathews initiated our church's involvement in BFW in the early 1980s as an answer to his prayers to minister to world hunger. Rev. Steve and Vonnie, his wife, restructured the Mission Council and formed the Hunger Committee in the early 1990s as a subcommittee of the Mission Council. In the 2000s, Rev. Fred and Rev. Peter of First Congregational Church preached a "dialogue" sermon on hunger followed by a soup luncheon. A few years later the Hunger Committee held a Third World Dinner demonstrating the food discrepancy between countries of the world.

Cents-Ability is a program of the Presbyterian Hunger Program. Our church's involvement through the Hunger Committee began in 2000 and has continued steadily through the years. <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/hunger/nationaldevelopment/what-cents-ability/>

First Presbyterian of Muskegon is a certified Hunger Action Congregation since 2018. Sue and Mitzi, along with Mary Ellen and Julie, organize the work of these two missions for the Hunger Committee. Early organizers led the congregation in writing letters to and sponsoring an intern from Bread for the World. The Hunger Committee and Mission Council—and people fed by Cents-Ability money in our community and supported in getting food through the effort of Bread for the World—thank you for your very generous contributions to these feeding ministries.

This article is based on articles written by Joan Hollar, 40-year member of the Mission Council, along with her husband Sam Hollar, who recently moved to be near family in Ann Arbor.

Thanks All Around



It was exciting to see so many from our congregation at the “From Piano Bench to Organ Bench” event sponsored by the Muskegon Lakeshore Chapter of the American Guild of Organists! The two-hour event featured four organists from around West Michigan playing prepared pieces for clinician Nicholas P, a composer and pianist/organist currently serving as Director of Music at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Grand Rapids, and Choir Director and Music Theory Instructor at Muskegon Community College. The group was also treated to demonstrations on the organ . Each participant received suggestions and encouragement from Mr. P, and was asked to experiment with the many tone colors and articulations possible on the organ, while teaching all those present a great deal about the instrument and how its use differs from that of a piano.

The Muskegon Lakeshore Chapter sends its profuse thanks to FPC for allowing them to hold this event in our beautiful facility, and praised the quality of our organ. From chapter Sub-Dean Eileen H: “All Members of FPC Muskegon—Thank you for the opportunity for the...chapter to hold a program of continuing education on your beautiful Casavant organ. It is a splendid teaching instrument and demonstrates how the organ can be a supportive yet leading instrument in our worship.”



From myself, thanks to you all for the many ways you support the arts here at FPC Muskegon, from investing in an instrument of such excellent quality, to your commitment to caring for it and your willingness to share it, to your attendance at events such as today’s. You are a remarkable community of faith!

Roxanne D



Thank you to those that have completed and returned their Estimate of Giving Commitment Card for 2023. If you have not returned your pledge card, please do so as soon as you are able so that the Finance Council may begin planning the 2023 budget. If you have already mailed in your estimate of giving for 2023, please accept our gratitude for your support.



Advent/Christmas



Come one, come all, to bring in the Advent cheer! Church decorating begins after the worship service on Sunday, November 27th. Many hands make quick work. Decorating should only take an hour. Your help will be very much appreciated!



The Christmas Season is a season of joy and festivities. For people who have lost loved ones or who have painful memories regarding the season, it can be a very difficult time. **On Thursday night, December 15 at 6:30 p.m. in the chapel,** we will have a Blue Christmas Service for those who need space to pray, lament, remember loved ones and acknowledge the difficulty of this season. Opportunity to light a blue candle in memory of a loved one will be part of this service. Feel free to invite friends who may need an experience like this. All are welcome.



The Mission Council sponsors the Christmas Offering. Gifts will be given to Mission for Area People Medical Fund. MAP supports the cost of prescriptions, durable medical equipment, dental work, transportation, or other unmet medical needs to over 300 people per year. The fund is meant to provide limited financial assistance for emergency situations where no other funding sources are secured. Please make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church noting MAP Christmas Offering on the memo line.



When we give to the Christmas Joy Offering, we share our love with the leaders of our Church — past, present and future — who point us to God.

 CHRISTMAS JOY
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE
NOVEMBER 27 - DECEMBER 18

In the story of God, as we tell it, there is a barrier that exists between the Created world and its Creator. A wall. Sin, we believe, separates us from God, and separation from God is unbearable.

Our story goes on to tell us that God, seeing that we had no hope in ourselves of getting over, or through or around what separates us, offered us a gift in Jesus Christ, who opens a door — a door we could not open ourselves.

What a gift!

But the story goes on to say that Jesus is the *perfect* gift; not only opening a door but coming through it. Our story says God is with us.

In Jesus, God joined with humanity, pointing the way to the end of our separation. And in his life, death and resurrection, so our story of God goes, Jesus *is* the door, now standing open. The giving continues because God is with us, still — and always.

Because being with us is part of God's story, being with others is part of our call.

During this Advent Season, we are called to support the Christmas Joy Offering, to celebrate God's perfect gift and open doors for those we might not be able to meet face to face, but who need the support that our gifts provide.

We support the potential of students of color who are becoming leaders in our churches and communities as we seek to come alongside them, to encourage and to open doors. And we support church workers and their families who encounter critical financial needs as we come alongside them, to assist them — we open doors for them. We thank God for being “with us” through the gift of Jesus and for joining us together as the Church and, through our gifts, with those who have need.

The story of God, as we tell it, is not about a barrier, but about a gift. It's not about the separation, but about the gift of “being with.” Please give generously to the Christmas Joy Offering, in celebration of God's perfect gift to us. Give because it brings us together, to open doors of relief and opportunity and to relationships that are part of God's story, a part of God's perfect gift to us.

Our gifts reflect our generous God. Our gifts support leaders in our Church and world — past, present and future.

The Board of Deacons has often been described as the “caring arm of the church.” While all Christians are called by Jesus to love their neighbors, our Board of Deacons work in an organized manner to brighten the lives of people in distress, both members of our congregation and the greater Muskegon community.

This ministry is funded through Christmas and Easter flower donations, as well as contributions throughout the year. We are asking the members and friends of First Presbyterian Church to be generous with their donations during the Advent/Christmas season. Please make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church, noting Deacons' Fund on the memo line. You may also contribute online through the FPC website, indicating that your contribution is for the Deacons.

Deacons Fund
Offering



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
<p>10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:30am - Hanging of the Greens 11:20am - Youth Bible Study 11:30am - New Elder Meeting</p>	<p>John Bengtson - Vacation 2pm - O & C Council Meeting 6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word 6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>Pastor Loring on Holiday</p>	<p>3:45pm - Supper House 7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			<p>10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:20am - Youth Bible Study 11:30am - MCKS Council Meeting</p>
<p>10am - Worship 11am - Cong. Mtg./Election of Officers 11:15am - After Worship Hospitality 11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>12:30pm - Book Club 2pm - Faith Development Meeting 6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word 6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>5:30pm - Worship & Music Council 7pm - Property Council Mtg.</p>	<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			<p>10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:20am - Youth Bible Study 11:30am - MCKS Council Meeting</p>
<p>10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:20am - Youth Bible Study 11:30am - MCKS Council Meeting</p>	<p>9pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word 11:30am - Prayer Shawls Ministry 11:45am - Staff Meeting 12:30pm - Sarah Circle 12:30pm - Staff Luncheon 6:30pm - Finance/Stewardship Council</p>	<p>7pm - Glenview Holiday Gathering</p>	<p>6:30pm - Blue Christmas Service 7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			<p>10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:20am - Youth Bible Study 11:30am - MCKS Council Meeting</p>
<p>10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>12:30pm - Book Discussion Group 6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word 6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>6pm - Joint Session/Dinner Meeting</p>	<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			<p>10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>
<p>Christmas Day 10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality</p>	<p>Church Office Closed</p>	<p>John Bengtson - Vacation</p>	<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>				<p>Christmas Eve 7pm - Christmas Eve Worship Service</p>

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
<p>11am - Worship</p> <p>11am - After Worship Hospitality</p> <p>11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>12:30pm - Book Club</p> <p>2pm - Faith Development Meeting</p> <p>6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word</p> <p>6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>5:30pm - Worship & Music Council</p> <p>7pm - Property Council Mtg.</p>	<p>3:45pm - Supper House</p> <p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			<p>9am - Session Meeting/Retreat</p>
<p>11am - Worship</p> <p>11am - After Worship Hospitality</p> <p>11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>9pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>9am - Staff Meeting</p> <p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word</p> <p>11:30am - Prayer Shawls Ministry</p> <p>12:30pm - Sarah Circle</p> <p>6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>8:30pm - Finance/Stewardship Council</p>	<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>	<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			
<p>10am - Worship</p> <p>10am - After Worship Hospitality</p> <p>11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>12:30pm - Book Discussion Group</p> <p>6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word</p>	<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>	<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			<p>10am - Girl Scouts</p>
<p>10am - Worship</p> <p>11am - After Worship Hospitality</p> <p>11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>2pm - O & C Council Meeting</p> <p>6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word</p> <p>6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>5:30pm - Worship & Music Council</p> <p>7pm - Property Council Mtg.</p>	<p>3:45pm - Supper House</p> <p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			
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God is able to
provide you with every
blessing
in
abundance...



2 Corinthians 9:8