

JANUARY  
2024

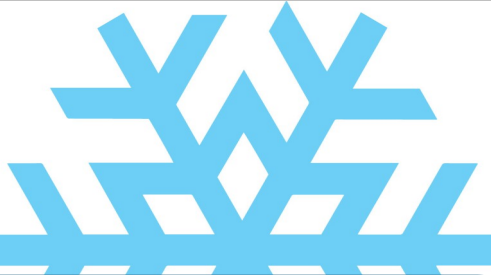
# Highland Herald

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN




Ash Wednesday is an important day in the church calendar. It marks the beginning of Lent and helps remind us that although we are mortal and sinful, God's love and forgiveness are abundant and eternal. This year, our Ash Wednesday service will be held in the chapel on February 14. Stop by anytime between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. We'll have several interactive prayer stations set up, and worshippers will be invited to move through them at your own pace.

VISIT US ONLINE [fpcmuskegon.org](http://fpcmuskegon.org)



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A snowman graphic wearing a black top hat with a green band and a green scarf. It has stick arms and a carrot nose. The snowman is surrounded by blue and white snowflakes and a blue swirl.



I can't say I was surprised, but I was tremendously grateful for the wisdom, enthusiasm, and openness the elders brought to our recent Session Retreat last weekend. We spent time discussing the role of elders in the church and the role of communication in good church leadership. We learned about how to run engaging and effective meetings. We considered what we do really well at First Presbyterian Church and what some of our growth areas might be. And in a brainstorming session, we asked: Who are we? Who is our church for? And who is God calling us to be right here, right now?, "for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14).

My favorite part of the day might have been our Bible study. Small groups each discussed a different Bible story about change, and then we came back together to share what we thought God might be trying to teach us about change through these stories.

### **Genesis 12:1-3**

In this passage, God tells Abram that he will become a great nation that will bless all the other nations ... but first Abram has to leave home. We noted how scary—and exciting—that must have been. They believed that they'd received a message from God, but it must have taken a lot of courage to act on it without any kind of proof.

Abram and Sarai took a huge leap of faith, but it took years—and some failed starts and stops along the way—before God's promise finally came true. This story reminded us that making changes takes careful discernment of God's Word. Change also requires action; sometimes we'll need to take leaps of faith. Once we leap, we'll need patience because very few kinds of meaningful change pay off immediately.

### **Matthew 12:9-14**

In this story, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath—and the Pharisees are outraged. The Pharisees are committed to the way things have always been. When Jesus comes in and shakes things up—even when his changes bring healing and new life to vulnerable people like this man with the withered hand—all the Pharisees seem to care about is that Jesus is breaking tradition.

We reflected on how this story is a familiar one. At its core, it's a conflict between values. We challenged one another to think about what we value more: Tradition and rule-following? Or looking out for the health and flourishing of our community? As our Session elders make changes this year, we will try to keep love and care for God's people at the heart of everything we decide.

### **Acts 10:9-48**

Peter has a vision that suggests no foods are off-limits for Jews anymore. Immediately after the vision, the Holy Spirit tells him that three men are about to come looking for him and that he should go with them. When three messengers appear, Peter goes with them and meets Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile. Peter finally understands the vision: no one is clean or unclean. God's good news and grace is now available to everyone! He preaches to Cornelius and his family, and they are all baptized.

One of our elders noted that Peter receives confirmation of both his vision and the Spirit's message: three messengers really show up! And when they take him to meet a God-fearing Gentile, Peter's vision about the clean and unclean foods suddenly makes sense. This confirmation is an important part of the discernment process. If we think we hear God pointing us in a certain direction, we should try to confirm the Spirit's leading through prayer, scripture reading, and paying attention to the opportunities God puts in our everyday lives.

Like the Matthew text, this story from Acts also features a break in tradition. For the early church, welcoming Gentiles into the family of God would have been a difficult and even painful adjustment. They were fighting against centuries of prejudice, hatred, and violence. Now they were supposed to welcome the Gentiles with open arms?

The modern church isn't immune from this. We say that everyone is welcome in church, but how do we react when people experiencing homelessness join us for worship? Or people from the AA groups? Teenage mothers? Queer people? Together, the elders voiced a hope that we wouldn't let tradition—or our own comfort—stand in the way of joyfully making room for all of God's people.

Church, you have a strong team of elders. They, alongside of your staff, are eager to see where God might lead us this year. Together, we're going to make some changes. And as we all know, change is difficult. But change can also bring new life, joy, and hope! I pray we can continue to walk into the future together, trusting on God to lead us where we need to go. May God's Word and God's people give us the strength and trust to walk the road ahead faithfully. Amen.

*Pastor Mackenzie*

2024 SESSION ROSTER	
NAME	COUNCIL *Denotes Moderator
Bob Bengston	*Finance; Outreach, Communication & Technology; Personnel
Suzanne Carl	Mission
Vella Caruso	Faith Development, Nominating
Quinn Champion	*Faith Development; Personnel
Jean Chin	Mission; *Nominating
Clark Ganson	*Property
Cammie Hussey	*Mission
Lee Kleinheksel	*Worship & Arts; Personnel
Don Olson	Property
Vic Prowant	*Clerk of Session; *Personnel; Finance
Kirk Wahamaki	*Outreach, Communication & Technology; Worship & Arts

First Presbyterian Church of Muskegon’s mission is to “nourish minds, bodies and spirits,” and we are always looking for fresh and interesting ways to do this. In that spirit, Rev. Mackenzie and a group of session elders came up with an idea we’ll be trying in 2024. On a quarterly basis, a guest pastor or speaker will be invited to give the sermon on a given Sunday. This will be intentional and different from what we know as traditional “pulpit supply.” On the weeks we have guests, Pastor Mackenzie will still be conducting all other aspects of our worship service and will be available for discussion.

Why are we trying this? Our guests might be seminary students or recent graduates. Bringing them in as guest preachers provides them with much needed experience and learning opportunities. It's one of the church's responsibilities to grow church leaders; intentionally bringing in new preachers will help us fulfill this mission! Other times, we might bring in experts on particular subjects, diverse people with unique experiences and perspectives that can expand our thinking, and more. We hope that intentionally inviting diverse people into our pulpit will bring new and thought-provoking perspectives that will enliven our worship and expand our theological imagination for who God is. Thanks for trying new things with us! We hope and trust that we will all learn and grow through this experience.

*Worship and Arts Council*



# General Fund Financial Figures 2023 Dollars and Sense Summary

Actual Income/Expense	Year to Date
Income	\$ 264,992
Expense	\$ 290,754
Net Increase (Decrease)	\$ (25,762)
Budgeted Income/Expense	
Income	\$ 260,675
Expense	\$ 301,295
Net Increase (Decrease)	\$ (40,620)

The 2023 year ended with actual income higher than budgeted income and actual expenses lower than budget expenses, as shown above.

Thank you for supporting the operation of our church in the year 2023.

~Finance and Stewardship Council

Note:

The Per Capita Apportionment fee of \$40.05 per member for 2024 is due to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan in January of each year. Many of you have already contributed towards that fee, but if you haven't, please consider submitting a donation in the blue envelope from your packet of offering envelopes or take one from the back of the pew. Thank you for your consideration!

## KNITTERS IN ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY

In the spirit of Christmas and the mission of our church, the prayer shawl knitters and Presbyterian Women donated shawls, hats, and mittens to friends in our community.

Heads of household in the Family Promise program the week of December 3 received shawls, along with a week of group dinners provided by First Presbyterian Church. Joyce and her grandson, Robbie and his wife, and Adam and Bailey and their children were blessed with these offerings. The inspirational verse we delivered with the shawls was Psalm 23:6, "... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The same week, Supper House volunteers from church presented the longtime cook Brenda Coleman and her assistant Ruth Rone with prayer shawls. The women were delighted. We delivered their shawls with a recap of the story of Jesus and his disciples feeding the 5000, emphasizing Jesus' words to his disciples: "You give them something to eat." The gift of shawls gave Brenda and Ruth a boost they needed in the busy holiday season.

Presbyterian Women knitters filled the mitten tree with 12 hats and 8 pairs of mittens. These warm winter items were delivered to Every Woman's Place right after the New Year.



## BLANKET SUNDAY 2024

A Project of Church World Service and in Support of Local Missions



Blanket Sunday is a program of Church World Service which distributes blankets to international war refugees and natural disaster survivors. Each ten-dollar donation to the Blanket Sunday program provides a heavy or light blanket, depending on the climate, for a person in need. Envelopes in the pew racks will be available during the month of February for you to contribute to this mission.

First Presbyterian Church of Muskegon has expanded the mission of Blanket Sunday to include local agencies. Since the 1990s, our church has donated new or gently used blankets and throws to Every Woman's Place and the Mission for Area People's clothing pantry. Blankets are collected on the table in the Wickham hallway during the month of February. Each one of these blankets, whether a large fleece blanket or a small baby blanket, will provide comfort and hope to a local person in need.

Thank you for your generosity in supporting Blanket Sunday, making people warm and more secure.

## February Mission Box

### Mission for Area People Food Pantry

Groceries and personal hygiene items are welcomed by the clients of the Mission for Area People Food Pantry. Each MAP Food Pantry client receives a week's worth of food when they apply.

Donations of the following foods to the MAP Food Pantry are therefore appreciated:

- Pasta
- Peanut butter
- Brown rice
- Tuna packed in water
- Fruit packed in low sugar or own juices
- Soup with low sodium, lots of vegetables
- Cereal with healthy grains

The following personal care items have also been requested by MAP staff:

- Deodorant
- Shampoo, bars of soap
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- Disposable razors
- Dish detergent, laundry soap
- Diapers, toilet paper

Please keep in mind that all donated items must be unexpired and unopened. Thank you for your generous giving to this agency in our community.

In 1990, a simple prayer: "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat" was delivered during a church service at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC led by Brad Smith, who was serving as a seminary intern at the time. This gave birth to an idea. Why not harness the energy and enthusiasm of Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football, food and fun, to unite the nation for a higher good? Youth groups could collect dollars in soup pots and canned food for those in need and send every dollar and food donation DIRECTLY to a local charity of THEIR choice. Now people of all ages tackle hunger to help support local hunger relief.



**February 11, 2024**

Souper Bowl of Caring is a youth-inspired movement which provides many opportunities to build upon leadership skills, philanthropic endeavors, and network with their peers on hunger-related issues within their local communities. Thousands of participants including churches, schools, youth groups, community partners, grocery partners, local businesses, media partners, NFL teams, passionate individuals and the youth of First Presbyterian Church have contributed to this annual event raising over \$170 MILLION dollars nationally since it started in 1990. Every year ensures that every penny, dollar, or food item collected by Souper Bowl of Caring participants goes directly to hunger-relief charities.

We are still very much involved in contributing to this cause. We will have a Souper Bowl of Caring Soup Luncheon following worship on February 11<sup>th</sup>. Please consider sharing a pot of your favorite soup with your church family. A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board. Bread, crackers, and beverages will be provided. If you are unable to bring a pot of soup, please join your church family for lunch anyway. There will be plenty of soup to share!!!

We will also have two large soup pots to collect your donation to the Souper Bowl of Caring. Each pot will have the name of the teams participating in the Super Bowl. Drop your donation in the pot of the team you think will win the game!! Donations will also be accepted through the mail or online at [www.fpcmuskegon.org](http://www.fpcmuskegon.org). Please indicate that your donation is for Souper Bowl of Caring.

We will meet Tuesday, February 6, at 11:30 am. The knitters are always open to requests for prayer shawls. New members are also welcome, even those who would simply like to visit a meeting.





# *Winter Art Class*

What a wonderful turnout for our first Art Class!  
Thanks, Mary, for organizing and teaching this class.

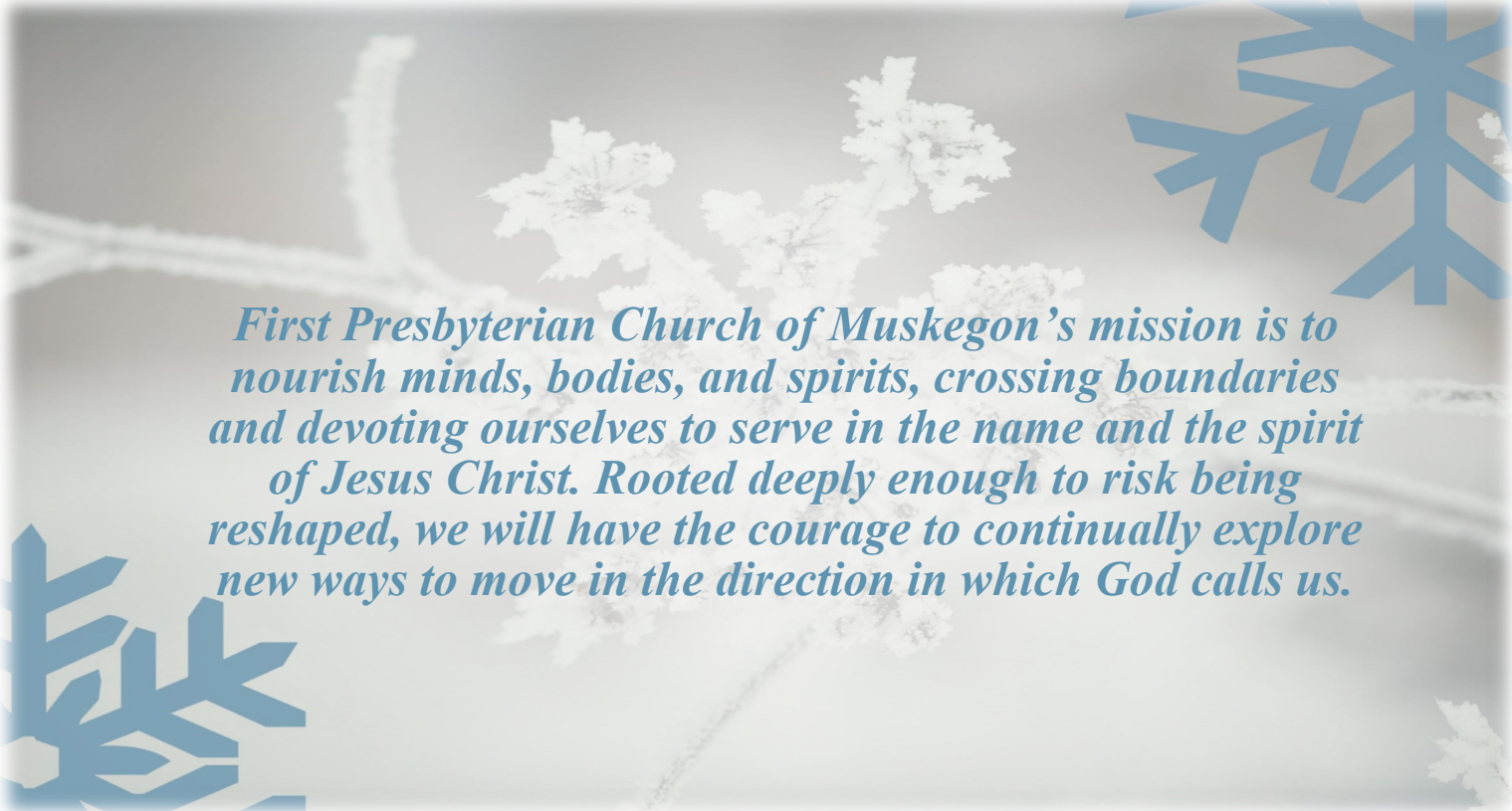
28	29	30	1	2	3
<p>10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:15am - Falling Upward Class</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 10:30am - Dwelling in the Word 6pm - Choir Rehearsal 6pm - Yoga Class 7pm - Actors' Workshop</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 9:15am - Yoga Class 7pm - Property Council Mtg.</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 7pm - AA Big Book Study</p>	<p>10am - Girl Scouts</p>
<p><b>Cents-Ability Offering/BFV Bake</b> 10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:15am - Falling Upward Class 11:30am - Worship &amp; Arts Council</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 12:30pm - Book Discussion Group</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 9:30am - FPC Staff Meeting 10:30am - Dwelling in the Word 11:30am - Prayer Shaw's Ministry 6pm - Choir Rehearsal 6pm - Yoga Class 7pm - Actors' Workshop</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 9:15am - Yoga Class 7pm - Property Council Mtg.</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 7pm - AA Big Book Study</p>	<p>10am - Girl Scouts</p>
<p>10am - Worship (Communion) 11am - Souper Bowl Soup 11:30am - MC&amp;S Council Meeting</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 5pm - O, C &amp; T Council Meeting</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 10:30am - Dwelling in the Word 12:30pm - Sarah Circle 3pm - Faith Development Meeting 6pm - Choir Rehearsal 6pm - Yoga Class 6:30pm - Finance/Stewardship 7pm - Actors' Workshop</p>	<p><b>Ash Wednesday Prayer Stations</b> 7:30am - AA Meeting 9:15am - Yoga Class</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 7pm - AA Big Book Study</p>	<p>10am - Girl Scouts</p>
<p><b>Newsletter Deadline</b> 10am - Worship 11am - After Worship Hospitality 11:15am - Deacons Meeting</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 12:30pm - Book Discussion Group</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 10:30am - Dwelling in the Word 7pm - Actors' Workshop</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 6:30pm - Session Meeting</p>	<p>7:30am - AA Meeting 7pm - AA Big Book Study</p>	<p>10am - Girl Scouts</p>
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Month	Day	Time	Event
Mar	2	10am	Girl Scouts
Mar	3	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	4	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	5	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	6	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	7	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	8	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	9	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	10	10am	Girl Scouts
Mar	11	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	12	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	13	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	14	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	15	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	16	10am	Girl Scouts
Mar	17	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	18	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	19	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	20	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	21	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	22	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	23	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	24	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	25	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	26	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	27	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	28	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	29	7:30am	AA Meeting
Mar	30	10am	Girl Scouts
Mar	31	10am	Girl Scouts



## First Presbyterian Church

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*First Presbyterian Church of Muskegon's mission is to nourish minds, bodies, and spirits, crossing boundaries and devoting ourselves to serve in the name and the spirit of Jesus Christ. Rooted deeply enough to risk being reshaped, we will have the courage to continually explore new ways to move in the direction in which God calls us.*