

The Missive, December 2022

First Presbyterian Church

8047 Church Street
Richland, MI 49083
(269) 629-4944
fprich@firstpresrichland.org
www.fprich.org

Rev. Dr. Mark W. Jennings
revmarkwj@gmail.com
(269) 598-0966 cell

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“Church on Christmas?”

Every six years or so, depending on when the leap years fall, Christmas Day falls on a Sunday. And the question comes up, “Will anyone come to church on Christmas morning?” Since I have been serving as a pastor, this has happened in 1988, 1994, 2005, 2011, 2016, and this year. It won’t happen again until 2033. In previous occurrences, there has been some conversation, but no real discussion about whether or not we should actually have worship on Christmas Sunday. It’s the Lord’s Day, and we gather for worship every Lord’s Day, no matter what.

Our Directory for Worship says, “We gather to worship God on the Lord’s Day (Sunday) because the gospels testify that Jesus rose from the dead early on the first day of the week. The Lord’s Day is also called the “eighth day” of creation, a sign of the new creation that has begun with Christ’s resurrection. While we may worship God on any day and at any time, the Sunday service—in particular—is a celebration of Christ’s resurrection and an anticipation of the fullness of God’s coming reign.”

So, with this in mind, we are joyfully holding a Christmas Morning Worship Service. It may be different, and hopefully special, because Christmas Day on the Lord’s Day happens only rarely and it is deserving of our recognition and celebration. Erin and I will be present to lead while Larry will keep us in tune at the organ. I’m told that someone from our wonderful production team will be present to live stream the service for those at home. This year’s service will be entitled “The Gift.” Our music, message, and interactive worship will focus on the concept of gifts, to give, to receive, to be a gift to another, and to recognize that others are gifts to us in return.

We hope you will join us and understand why many will be home, or at work, or someplace other than church. We joyfully embrace all who will be with us and warmly hold all others in hearts as we know you do the same for us!

*Grace and Peace,
Mark*

DECEMBER 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Practice 5:00: Girl Scouts 5:30: Wassailing Gull Lake Choir	2 6:30: Bunco Game Night	3
4 ~ 2 nd Sunday of ~ Advent 9:45: Worship, Communion & Sunday School 11:00: Just Love	5 1:00: Pastoral Care Team 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 7:00: Earth Care Committee	6 9:00: GPP Walk 10:00: Connected Threads at Beacon Point 10:00: Food Pantry 6:15: Brownies & Daisy Scouts	7 10:00: Food Pantry 12:00: Seasoned Seniors 5:30: Girl Scouts 6:00: Girl Scouts 7:00: Mission Committee	8 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Practice 6:00: Deacons Meeting	9	10 ### Kids Night ###
11 ~ 3 rd Sunday of ~ Advent 9:45: Worship, 2¢-a-Meal, Minute for Mission & Sunday School	12 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts	13 10:00: Connected Threads 10:00: Food Pantry 10:30: Christian Ed Leadership Team 7:00: Shared Blessings	14 10:00: Food Pantry 1:00: Book Club 4:30: Worship & Music 6:00: Girl Scouts 6:15: Session Meeting	15 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Practice 5:00: Girl Scouts 7:00: Moms' Group	16	17
18 ~ 4 th Sunday of ~ Advent 9:45: Worship, KidsFirst Christmas Pageant & Sunday School	19 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:30: Boy Scouts	20 10:00: Connected Threads 10:00: Food Pantry 12:00: Staff Lunch, Office Closed 6:15: Brownies & Daisy Scouts	21 10:00: Food Pantry 1:00: GPP Walk 5:30: Girl Scouts 6:00: Girl Scouts 6:00: Longest Night	22 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Practice	23	24 7:00: Christmas Eve Service
25 ~ Christmas ~ 9:45: Christmas Moming Worship	26 ~ Office Closed ~ 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:00: Boy Scouts	27 8:00: Men's Breakfast 10:00: Connected Threads 10:00: Food Pantry	28 10:00: Food Pantry 6:00: Girl Scouts	29 No Bible Study No Choir Practice	30	31 ~ New Year's Eve ~

WINTER WEATHER POLICY FOR 2022-2023

Please note our weather policy for the 2022-2023 winter: When Gull Lake Schools are closed, the church office is also closed. This means:

1. All scheduled daytime activities are canceled.
2. Scheduled evening activities will be decided based on weather conditions and cancellations will be posted in a timely manner.
3. Office staff: you are welcome to come in as needed. We ask that you keep the lobby lights off and the doors locked.

Food Pantry Policy is as follows:
Loaves and Fishes closes on a case by case basis. When they close, the Richland pantry will also close. See WWMT for announcements. All other closure decisions will be made by Paul.

Any closures will ALWAYS be posted in a timely manner on our FB page.

Adopted November 15, 2022

December Birthdays

1..... Andrew Fiordalis	14..... Mara Cazars	24..... Jeni Steele
1..... Joseph Juodalwkis	14..... Evan Odar	25..... Jan Petersen
4..... George Lovequist	14..... David Snyder	26..... Jennifer Stupica
4..... Grant Slezak	15..... Sarah Myland-Waseem	27..... Amy Juodawlakis
6..... Nathan Martens	15..... Lars Ruser	27..... Margaret Tantilla
8..... Jean Sowers	16..... Harry Stolt	29..... Laurie Alexander
8..... Carson Miller	20..... Michael Wright	29..... Karen Urban
9..... Nancy Hess	20..... Cathy Layson	29..... Carol Leeson
9..... Alanna Wyckoff	21..... Ashleigh Webb	31..... Jan Fisher
10..... Kendall Jennings	22..... Mike Juodawlakis	31..... Kay Polzin
10..... Kathleen Rothenberg	22..... Laura Monk	
11..... Connie Slater	24..... Jake Larson	

Anniversaries & Remembrances

16	Kay & Larry Irely	55 years	This December we remember the anniversary of Marilyn & Ed Davis on the 1st, and the anniversary of Kay & John Polzin on the 29th
18	Lib & Jerry Wittwer	57 years	
21	Liz & Allen Matthews	20 years	
29	Joyce & Chuck Farho	18 years	

Carillon Hymns and Honoree



<i>Date.... Selection</i>	<i>Honoree</i>
13 th <i>Jesus Loves Me</i>	<i>Zackery James Anderson</i>
14 th <i>Amazing Grace</i>	<i>Olga E. Boyer</i>
15 th <i>The Old Rugged Cross</i>	<i>Emma Hubbard</i>
16 th <i>Joyful, Joyful</i>	<i>Ellie Lynch</i>
24 th <i>Wedding March</i>	<i>Kay & John Polzin</i>



FPC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Earth Care: Mon. the 5th, 7pm in the Deacon Brown House.

Seasoned Seniors: Lunch and fellowship for our seasoned seniors, Free will offering. Wed. the 7th, Noon at New Hope Covenant Church.

Ladies Book Club: Discussing "Lady Clementine" by Marie Benedict. Wed. the 14th, 1pm at Tineke Stolt's home.

Friends of the Library Book Club: Discussing "The Midnight Library" by Matt Haig. Thurs. the

15th, 7pm and Fri. the 16th, 10:30am

Yorkville Family Christmas: Refreshments and beautiful, live music. Fri. the 16th, 6:30pm at the Yorkville Community Church.

Men's Breakfast: Food and Fellowship, Tues. the 28th, 8am at Liz's Parkview Café.

Richland Food Pantry: Call 269.343.3663 to make an appointment, Walk-ins Welcome. Tues. & Wed. 10am to Noon.



The Holly Bears a Berry

by Larry Myland

Shrinks might say I'm nuts, but Christmas is that time of year when normal, everyday miracles are more obvious to me. You too?

Sue and I have a pair of holly bushes along the rail of our front porch. Momma and Papa Holly. These are not just ordinary plants to us. Oh no, they occupy a special place in our hearts. This is so because they are our Christmas Hollies. Every year, I pamper them knowing that come Christmastime little sprigs of their berry-laden branches will be brought indoors to spread Christmas cheer.

Holly is known for its association with Christmas and for its beautiful sharp, green leaves, blood red berries and bitter bark, variously seen as symbols of Jesus.

A few spring seasons ago, our holly emerged from its winter nap more beautiful than ever. After its last round of plant food in the fall, it burst forth gloriously that spring. The leaves were such a silvery deep green that they sparkled in the sunlight. Momma Holly, the one that produces the berries, was absolutely peppered.

I was a happy camper because I had living proof that that coming Christmas would witness such a hall of holly that we could even use it to decorate Christmas gifts.

Later, in the summer, I was mowing the lawn with my faithful Craftsman push mower, known for its quiet operation. Something caused me to pause near the holly with all of the berries. I shut off the engine and began to examine the plant. There wasn't a single berry to be found. What was going on here? I was dumbfounded.

I was concerned enough to call Doctor Wedell at Wedell's Plant and Garden shop to see if they might have a medicine for the curing of our ailing holly. The man asked me to hold on while he talked with the holly expert, Dr. Wedell. He returned shortly to say that it was the blistering heat, that holly doesn't like really hot weather. I had actually suspected this before I had a definitive answer. The hallmark of that summer in Michigan was the almost overwhelming heat, with roasting temperatures well into the nineties. Dr. Wedell basically said that there was nothing that could be done. As a backup, I asked if they carried holly at Christmas and the man replied that they usually did. But it wouldn't be our very own holly and, to us, it just wouldn't be the same.

Summer at last merged into fall, and with it the cool and invigorating weather of October. But since we still got a lot of sunshine, the grass continued to grow like fall was the last thing on its mind. I still mowed at least once a week.

One day the mower conked out where I had stopped it earlier in the spring, right next to the then berry-laden bush. When I leaned over to start it, I cast the holly a longing glance. What I saw took my breath away. "Oh!" I gasped out loud. Before my eyes were hundreds of new blooms, many of which had already sprouted into beautiful, bright red berries. I almost had to pinch myself to make sure my eyes weren't deceiving me.

No doubt there is an entirely reasonable and scientific explanation for this, but for me it was a small but thrilling miracle.

The holly and the ivy
When they are both full grown
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown
O the rising of the sun
And the running of the deer
The playing of the merry organ
Sweet singing in the choir

Merry Christmas!

Note from Chris FPC Financial Secretary

by Chris Gobble

Envelopes are in! If you indicated that you wanted giving envelopes for 2023, you can pick them up in the office. If you can't make it in to the church to get them, we can mail your box to you. Just let me know! You can email me at firstpresbyterianchurch49083@gmail.com or call the office and leave a message. If you originally thought you didn't want envelopes and recently changed your mind, let me know and I can prepare a box for you. It's not too late.

While we're on the subject, don't forget about those pledge forms. They're very helpful to facilitate budget planning. There is a pledge form right here in the Mission, attached to Paul's weekly email, as well as paper copies in the church office and in the sanctuary. You can fill them out and email them back to me, drop your paper copy in one of the baskets in the sanctuary, or mail it back to the church. Please and thank you!

Small Group Ministries Updates

by Amber Beals

Over the last month, I have made it my focus to listen and try to learn what types of small groups the church is looking for. Thank you to those who have shared your ideas and I hope you continue to share them with me. A few exciting things coming up:

Bunco Night: Friday, December 2 at 6:30pm. Looks like we have enough people to play, but we can still take more if interested! There will be prizes!!!

Gull Prairie Preserve Walks: Join us for a beautiful walk with great company! Meet in North church parking lot. Cancellations will be announced on Facebook. Also, if you would like to be notified by email or text, please let Amber know. amberbeals@gmail.com or 269-303-1673. We have set some regular dates:

First Tuesday of the month at 9am: December 6

Third Wednesday of the month at 1pm: December 21

Mom's Night: December 15, 6:30 pm-Deacon Brown House: We will be painting ceramic ornaments together and making a plan for the group going into 2023! Ornaments supplied free of charge. No skill required!

Longest Night Dinner Gathering: December 21, 6pm: December 21 is the darkest day of the year, the winter solstice. From that point on, light grows in the world. Before the modern era, people lived in rhythm with nature and their lives were dependent on harvest and growth cycles. The darkest night was a time to celebrate that they made it through the most difficult time and hope was around the corner. The Christian calendar borrowed this time of year from the Celtic tradition and has used it as a time to celebrate the birth of Christ when a new light enters the darkness. It can be helpful to step away from the busy Christmas season of presents and shopping and parties to consider what this time means for you and for the church. Darkness looks like different things for each person, but we've all experienced it either personally or communally. Maybe it's personal grief from a death, divorce, or health condition, or maybe it's communal grief over climate change, war, or political discord. Darkness is often the time when something new is born. What does this light coming out of the darkness mean for you or for the church?

I am planning a candlelight dinner, prayer, and meditation time on December 21 at 6pm, for a small group of up to 10 at the Deacon Brown House. If you are looking for a small, contemplative gathering this holiday season, this one is for you! Please call or email the office if you are interested in attending this. The menu will be fairly simple- a hearty stew or soup with crusty bread, salad, and wassail. When you call or email to sign up, there will be an opportunity to sign up to bring one of these food items, which will be very much appreciated.

Just Love Our Newest Outreach Community

by Sandy Carahaly

On Sunday, November 6th, our newest outreach committee, Just Love, met in the Deacon Brown house. Our broad goal is to identify ways we can "walk the talk" regarding LGBTQIA welcome and affirmation in our church community and the community at large. Several attendees shared personal experiences as members of the LGBTQIA community, parents, and supporters. We all agreed that it is important to be visible and vocal allies and advocates, particularly in the divisive climate in which we find ourselves currently. We discussed several ways we can Be The Church more visibly and actively, as well as the intersectionality of LGBTQIA and other marginalized communities.

A Minute to Learn: Allyship

What does allyship look like to you? Is it how you vote? Is it celebrating Pride month? Is it being a safe space for LGBTQ+ youth? How can you be a better ally? Here are some simple things we can do...

- Use a person's name and pronouns.
- Take time to learn; do your own research online, do not rely on LGBTQIA people to use their emotional energy to educate you.
- Share your own pronouns; this shows you are a safe person. You can do this verbally, or by wearing a pronoun pin.
- Use your voice and your privilege to stand up for marginalized people.
- Pray.
- Join us! Our next meeting will be in January. Watch the weekly emails for details, or reach out to Pastor Mark for more information.

Days of Significance, December 2022

1st: World AIDS Day: <https://www.worldaidsday.org>

8th: Pansexual Pride Day: <https://gayety.co/how-you-can-celebrate-pansexual-pride-day>

10th: Human Rights Day: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/human-rights-day>

2023 Stewardship
First Presbyterian Church of Richland
For the Glory of God
Giving Period- January 1st through December 31st, 2023

On November 13, 2022 we join together with First Presbyterian Church of Richland members and friends to celebrate and support First Presbyterian Church of Richland. I/we have reflected upon the Church's influence upon the community, the world, and myself- and submit this pledge with faith and gratitude.

General Fund Total Annual Pledge
\$____/week or \$____/month or \$____/____ = \$_____

Building Fund
\$____/week or \$____/month or \$____/____ = \$_____

Notes: _____

Please be sure to use your pledge envelopes to aid in the administrative task of tracking offerings.

Would you like pledge envelopes in 2023? (Please circle one)

Weekly Monthly No

Name(s):
Address:
City, St, Zip:
Telephone:
Email:

Options for returning your completed form:

- Email to the Financial Secretary: firstpresbyterianchurch49083@gmail.com
- Mail to: Financial Secretary
First Presbyterian Church
8047 Church St
Richland, MI 49083

Please return completed forms by December 31, 2022. Thank you!

Shared Blessings



A MATTHEW 25 SERVICE GROUP

Shared Blessings: A Matthew 25 Service Group

by Erin O'Sullivan

When Shared Blessings met in November, we spoke about Black History in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek and the impact of slavery and racism. Someone asked about the village of Richland, and specifically, our church. They wondered whether the community or the church had any accounts of resisting the scourge of slavery and later, racism.

It is easy to assume that mid-19th century Richland, a small white community concerned mainly with agriculture, would be somewhat insular and unaffected by the Atlantic Slave Trade, the burgeoning resistance, and the foreshadowing of confrontations to come. We did! We erroneously assumed there was not much to find yet we discovered we were wrong.

“As in many northern communities, there was considerable anti-slavery sentiment among Gull Prairie residents during the 1840’s and 1850’s. This sentiment had expressed itself earlier; and an anti-slavery society had been formed at the community’s Fourth of July celebration in 1836. A number of Richland citizens were reported to be active in the Underground Railroad.” Deacon Simeon Mills and his brothers (all charter members of the church) are among those listed.

History happened here.

Source: Harrison, E., McBride, C., McKean, E, (1981)
Richland From Its Prairie Beginnings, The Richland
Community Library

Scouting Life 294

by Amber Beals

BSA Pack 294 and BSA Troop 294 have both been busy this fall! The scouts have engaged in many outdoor activities. For the troop, which is made up of the scouts aged 11+, here is a sample of some of their activities:

September:

- Overnight camping at Fort Custer followed by an 8 mile kayaking trip down the Kalamazoo River
- Service project at the church to assist with tree removal
- Camporee in Shelby Township where the scouts dressed up as folk heroes, played a lot of games, and camped
- Scouting Eagle project involving the Butterfly garden at the RACC.

October:

- Wilderness camping trip up at Manistee where the scouts hiked and camped for a weekend
- Spookeree camping trip in Clare, MI, where the scouts joined other troops in decorating their campsites to scare the visitors as they rolled by on hay rides

November:

- Girl troop camped out at Kiwanis
- Christmas Trees arrived; scouts unloaded, sorted and priced, and will now be selling on weekends until they are gone!

What I LOVE about the scouting program is the focus on leadership skills and community service. Each scout is given an opportunity and encouraged to participate in a leadership position in a very safe environment, with guidance from leaders only as needed. It is a scout-led troop. The scouts plan their activities, participate in the meal planning and shopping, they cook and prepare their meals on campouts, and work together to keep the camping trailer organized. The Scouting program also works hard to ensure there is no bullying and is very open to individuals with disabilities. I highly encourage anyone with kids 5+ (boys or girls) that enjoy the outdoors to consider signing them up. Come see me if you are interested!

In the spring, we will be creating a fire pit in the corner of the North church parking lots so be sure to watch for that!

Wait, What? Questions & Answers

by Rev. Mark Jennings

Do you have questions about something you heard in church? Have you always wondered why we do or say the things we do? Wondered what something means? This regular column is the place to bring up those questions and try to find an answer.

“Letters (Missives)”

Back in October our lessons in church were from Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy. Is this the same as an “epistle?” Is that the same as a “missive?” Were letters common in ancient times?

Another good question! A letter, an epistle, and a missive are pretty much the same thing. Technically an epistle is a type of letter that, unlike modern letters, has the name of the sender at the very beginning. An example is the Epistle to the Romans that begins “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ . . . to all God’s beloved in Rome.” A missive is also a letter, but that term is usually applied to a long letter often written to a group of people. Although in the Hebrew Scriptures (what we sometimes call the Old Testament) have no documents in letter form, of the 27 New Testament books, 21 are letters. By the time of Alexander the Great (4th Century BC) and later in the Roman Empire, written communication had become much more common than during the time that the Hebrew Scriptures were being written.

Scholars suggest that during the time of Jesus only about ten percent of the people were literate. When Paul decides to communicate with the people in one of the churches that his missionary work had taken him to, it would have been common practice for him to hire a secretary to write the letter. This is what most people did, and a letter written on papyrus (the paper of ancient times) would go through several copies before it was sent out—a process that often took a week or more. In fact, many scholars think that Paul’s letters may exist today because a scribe or secretary saved the copies that were made, not because the churches in Galatia or Philippi or Thessalonica kept the letters addressed to them.

It is also interesting to note that Paul’s letters were rather lengthy. We have letters from other ancient writers that are significantly shorter. Cicero’s averaged 295 words, a private letter from a poor person averaged 87 words. Seneca wrote longer ones that averaged 995 words. But Paul obviously had a lot to say, his letters average 2,495 words and the letter to Rome has 7,114 words. This length would have increased the cost of sending such a letter. A short letter written on papyrus that a soldier wrote home to say he had reached his assignment safely had a likely cost of about \$50 in today’s currency. Paul’s letter to Rome would have cost him over \$2,000.

There was an official Roman postal service, but it was not for private use. A letter would be given to someone who was already traveling in the appropriate direction. From Paul’s letters we know that he entrusted his letters to friends or church members who had the assignment of taking a letter from the apostle to that church. Even so, we think that some of Paul’s letters may have been “circulars,” missives that were passed around between several local churches—perhaps this was to save money!

*Much of this information comes from several articles in The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible.

Feature of the Month Pastoral Care Team

by Pam Foster

We often hear or read about our Pastoral Care Team on Facebook, in our weekly emails, and in the Missive leading me to wonder what they do and/or what they’re all about. I spent some time last week with Pastor Mark and Erin and they shared a bit of the history on how the Pastoral Care Team came about and who is currently serving and helping with the care for our members.

We all know our church’s membership is divided among our Deacons who often are assigned 12+ families or individuals to reach out to during the year for various reasons such as a serious illness, surgery, or a family death. However, there are often times when a “simple” visit is important and needed. . . a time to sit and talk and pray. . . being a friend who shows care, concern, and love. That need was exactly what Bob Nash recognized in 2010 and with the assistance of Murray Cooper, the Pastoral Care Team was established and is still active and going strong today.

Over the years the team has had numerous volunteers who share a rich history of loving those who might need and enjoy special visits. The team meets monthly and currently there are 20-25 people who are receiving visits.

A big thank you to our Pastoral Care Team members: Marilyn Alman, Tineke Stolt, Ken Hetzel, Joan Willemstyn, Tom Stegink, Jennifer Spengler, Steve Sutherland, Erin O’Sullivan Jennings, and Pastor Mark.

If you have a need or know someone who would like a special visit, please contact any of the members.

First Presbyterian Church
8047 Church Street
Richland, MI 49083

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STAFF

Dr. Mark W. Jennings, Pastor
Larry Myland, Director of Music
Owen Rushford, Director of Choirs
Brooke Heck, Sunday School Director
Amber Beals, Coordinator of Small Group Ministry
Rachel Little, Office Manager
Connie Slater, Sexton
Gretchen Ferris, Treasurer
Chris Gobble, Financial Secretary
Paul Gobble, Director of Communications

DECEMBER