

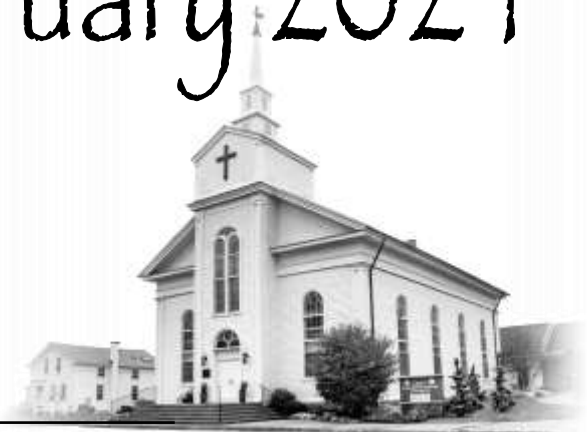
The Missive, February 2024

First Presbyterian Church

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“We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice.”

These words come from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he spoke at the National Cathedral in March of 1968. This was 56 years ago and it is a reminder that the arc is indeed long as we continue to strive towards equality and justice for all, regardless of race.

Each year, when February rolls around, I am reminded of the variety of topics from which to choose for The Missive: love and Lent are the two most obvious. I admit that this is the first time I am writing about race and Black History Month for the month of February. It was probably about time.

The first PC(USA) Matthew 25 Summit was held in January of this year in Atlanta Georgia. The Matthew 25 Invitation is an initiative for congregations to remember; When we welcome others, we welcome Christ, when we bring together people who are divided, we are doing God’s reconciling work.¹ One of the many ways congregations are challenged to do this is to “dismantle structural racism.” This is a question we have been grappling with ever since the inception of our Shared Blessings Social Witness Team which began meeting in the fall of 2021.

What is structural racism? How is it manifested? These are two of a host of questions we’ve wrestled with in the last two and a half years. But we are proud that we have been willing to go there,

to have difficult discussions in which not everyone would agree. We are proud of our work with S.H.A.R.E (Society for History and Racial Equity) in Kalamazoo. And we are proud to be doing this all the while attending to our other tasks like offering American Sign Language and facilitating the arrival of our Guatemalan family.

*We are excited to move forward in our conversation on race with a book read for all who are interested. We will offer a discussion on *Small Great Things* by Jodi Picoult on February 25th after worship. Perhaps you’ve heard Amber speak of this or have read about it in our weekly emails. Shared Blessings is working in collaboration with Small Group Ministries to provide this opportunity to grow in our faith and understanding about race, implicit and explicit bias, and how we too can start to do God’s “reconciling work”.*

February offers much to celebrate, especially love, but as we prepare for Lent, February reminds us that we have much on which to reflect and repent. We hope you will join us in the conversation, join us as we strive to deepen our understanding and deepen our commitment to act. The arc is indeed long, as Dr. King said, but it bends towards justice. But it won’t do this by itself; it takes all of us.

*Grace and peace,
Mark*

¹ Presbyterian Mission Website

FEBRUARY 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Rehearsal 5:00: Earth Care	2 5:00: Boy Scouts Pinewood Derby Set Up	3 9:00: Boy Scouts Pinewood Derby
4 9:45: Worship, Communion & KidsFirst 3:00: Boy Scouts Court of Honor Set Up	5 1:00: Pastoral Care Team 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts	6 9:00: FPC Walking Grp. 10:00: Food Pantry 11:00: Church Staff Mtg. 6:15: Brownie & Daisy Scouts	7 10:00: Food Pantry Noon: Seasoned Seniors 4:30: Girl Scouts 7:00: Mission Cmte.	8 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Rehearsal 5:00: Girl Scouts 6:00: Deacons	9	10
11 9:45: Worship, 2¢-a-Meal & KidsFirst 2:00: Boy Scouts 6:00: Youth Super Bowl Gathering	12 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts	13 10:00: Food Pantry 11:00: Church Staff Mtg.	14 ~ Valentine's Day ~ 10:00: Food Pantry 12:30: Worship & Music 6:15: Session Meeting 7:00: Ash Wednesday Service	15 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Rehearsal	16	17
18 9:45: Worship & KidsFirst 11:30: Just Love	19 ~ Presidents' Day ~ 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:30: Boy Scouts	20 9:00: FPC Walking Grp. 10:00: Food Pantry 10:00: Connected Threads at Beacon Pointe 11:00: Church Staff Mtg. 6:15: Brownie & Daisy Scouts	21 10:00: Food Pantry 4:30: Girl Scouts	22 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Rehearsal 5:00: Girl Scouts	23 Noon: ARC Blood Drive	24
25 9:45: Worship & KidsFirst 11:45: Shared Bless- ings Book Discussion	26 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:00: Boy Scouts	27 8:00: Men's Breakfast 10:00: Food Pantry 11:00: Church Staff Mtg.	28 10:00: Food Pantry 7:00: Mom's Group	29 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Rehearsal 6:30: 4H Clothing Project		

WINTER WEATHER POLICY FOR 2023-2024

Please note our weather policy for the 2023-2024 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. See WWMT for announcements.

If Loaves and Fishes closes, the Richland pantry may also close depending on local conditions. Closure decisions will be made by Paul.

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

February Celebrations

February Birthdays

1 stCheryl Wank	10 thJack Sizer	22 ndCarol Coverly
2 ndJackie Stasevich	11 thWendy Field	23 rdAlyson Muss
3 rdDon Egge	13 thJean Stafford	24 thMarz Carahaly
6 thNathan Ferris	13 thAllie Steele	24 thJoyce Farho
7 thPaul Gobble	15 thLisa Balmer	25 thAnn Fontaine
9 thJean Yoder	16 thPatricia Peters	26 thGlenn Fontaine
10 thEd Calkins	17 thCindy Lebiecki	28 thJaime Fiordalis Jozic
10 thGretchen Ferris	18 thBecky Stubbs	28 thBrian Young
10 thMarianne MacRitchie	19 thJerry Wittwer	
10 thChristopher Reece	21 stChad Stopher	

& Anniversaries

9 th Kathy Griffin & Tom Stegink, 43 years	18 th Ruth & Bill Mason, 19 years
11 th Ann & Glenn Fontaine, 17 years	26 th Pam & Rick Foster, 19 years

Carillon Hymns and Honoree

<i>Date</i>	<i>Selection</i>	<i>Honoree</i>
1 st	<i>On Eagle's Wings</i>	<i>Morris E. Stimson</i>
7 th	<i>Amazing Grace</i>	<i>Brandon Dallace Yourn</i>
14 th	<i>What a Friend We Have in Jesus</i>	<i>Karen and Jon Koets</i>



FPC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Connected Threads: Connected Threads will be meeting every third Tuesday, 10 am, at Beacon Pointe.

Men's Breakfast: Food and Fellowship, Tues. February 27th, 8am at Liz's Parkview Café.

Richland Food Pantry: Call 269.343.3663 to make an appointment, Walk-ins Welcome. Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am to Noon.

Weekly Bible Study: Every Thursday at 11am. in the Resource Center. Everyone is welcome!

Choir Rehearsal: Thursdays at 4pm.

Women's Book Club: Our next meeting is Wednesday, March 13, at the home of Sharon Wherry, 6368 Hidden Lake Circle, Richland. We are reading "Matrix" by Lauren Groff. Questions can be fielded by calling 402.890.6208.



by Sandy Carahaly

Thank you to everyone who attended our conversation on the “clobber verses,” and thank you to Pat Weatherwax for leading us in an extremely thought-provoking discussion.

Our next meeting is February 18 at 11 AM in the church library. The meeting agenda will be choosing a book for an all-church reading mission. All are welcome (and encouraged) to attend! Save the date for the book discussion on April 21, and mark your calendar for future meetings; we meet the third Sunday of every month at 11am.

A Minute to Learn: Who was Audre Lorde?

Audre Lorde’s birthday is February 18, but why is that significant for LGBTQ+ advocacy? Audre Lorde (1934-1992) was a self-described “black, lesbian, feminist, socialist, mother, warrior, poet” who used her poetry to express anger against the social and civil injustices that she both experienced and observed. She was active in civil rights, feminist, and anti-war movements in the 1960s, and brought awareness to the intersectionality of marginalized community experience, stating that “I am defined as other in every group I’m a part of.” She found that the feminist movement was becoming increasingly racist and homophobic, and called for a strengthening of community, emphasizing that marginalized people should strive to find common ground and use their differences as a source of strength, not division. Lorde succumbed to cancer in 1992 at the age of 58, but her legacy lives on in many organizations, monuments, and recognitions, including the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center and the Audre Lorde Project www.alp.org.

Notable Quotes:

“Whatever power we have that we don’t use will become an instrument against us, the question of differences is a perfect example. If we do not learn to use our differences constructively they will continue to be used against as causes for war. We must turn this around, not by eliminating difference or pretending it doesn’t exist, but examining how it may be used and recognized.”

– Audre Lorde

Days of Significance, February, 2024

- Feb. 6: Anniversary of the appointment of the first openly gay US federal Judge, Joseph Gale
- Feb. 7: National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- Feb. 12: National Freedom to Marry Day
- Feb. 18: Audre Lorde’s birthday
- Feb. 18-24: Aromantic Spectrum Awareness Week
- Feb. 22: Chosen Family Day



Shared Blessings

by Erin Jennings

Will we commit to being a Matthew 25 church someday?

Our Shared Blessings team began meeting so we could explore this question. Two and half years later, we continue the discussion. In that time, the Matthew 25 Invitation has expanded in its scope, offering more areas of focus.

Did you know that we already focus on four of them?

Do you know which ones? Here is the list:

1. Building congregational vitality
2. Dismantling structural racism
3. Eradicating systemic poverty
4. Climate Change/earth care
5. Militarism/peacemaking
6. Heteropatriarchy/gender justice

Answers: 1,2,4,6

We hope you will join us this spring as we continue the conversation. Meeting date tbd.

Other important info:

Jonatan, Angel, and Joel: we continue to wait for the immigration petition to be processed. Patience is growing thin as this is taking far longer than first thought. Prayers are appreciated.

Join us for a book discussion on race, February 25, after worship. *Small Great Things*, by Jodi Picoult. Copies are available in the church office for \$10. See Amber if you would like one.



Food Pantry Considers Adding Day

by Paul Gobble

The Richland Food Pantry in our church is considering adding a third shopping day with hours later in the afternoon for clients constrained by their work schedules. To expand our hours, we would need to add some new volunteers to our roster. If this sounds like something you would be interested in, please contact Paul (paul@firstpresrichland.org) and let him know.

Small Groups

by Amber Beals

Walking Group Dates: Meet in the North church parking lot at 9am. We will decide whether to walk the preserve trail or bike path based on weather.

February 6

February 20

Youth Super Bowl Gathering: 5th grade and up is invited to join other youth for a Super Bowl gathering on the evening of 2/11 at the Deacon Brown House. There will be food, games, crafts, and football! The event will start at 6pm and run until 10pm (if the game ends before that, we will wrap things up when it's done). It is expected that some youth will need to leave early and that is absolutely fine! Friends are welcome to join. We will be inviting youth from GL United Methodist as well. Though RSVP is not required, it would be helpful to have an idea of how many kids to expect for food purposes, so if you are able to, please email Amber at amberbeals@gmail.com by Friday, 2/9 if you are planning to come. Also, if you have an allergy we need to be aware of, please inform Amber of that as well. Thank you!

Book Discussion Group: February 25 following the service: I have some copies of the book chosen by our social witness team, *Shared Blessings*. The book is called *Small, Great Things* and is available for \$10. It is a novel by Jodi Picoult and is a story which grapples with issues of racism and criminal justice. If you are interested in the audiobook, it is available for free through the library's Libby app. I just finished listening to the book and it is very engaging and will make for some interesting discussion; I highly recommend to everyone whether or not you can make it to the discussion group.

Mom's Group: The mom's group has decided we will be reading a book together as a way to encourage growth in one another. Details about the first book will be announced soon. Next meeting: Wednesday, February 28 at the Deacon Brown House, 7pm.

Family Group: Starting soon, we will have a family group which meets every other month on a Sunday. Amber will create a sign up so families can sign up to help plan and organize a month. The family can choose whatever activity they would like: they can host a gathering at their house, or plan a game day, a hike somewhere, sledding, picnic, bowling, bonfire, baseball game, or whatever they think others would enjoy, and Amber will help communicate the event. The activity can be very simple and low-key, or more involved. Watch for a sign up!

New to the Library Cart: New book donation: *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism* by Tim Alberta -Check it out!

Monthly Home-Based Small Groups

by Amber Beals

If you are interesting in joining a home-based small group (organized by couple, individual, and family), there is still time to sign up! Please reach out to Amber at amberbeals@gmail.com or contact the office. The hope is for these groups to meet monthly and will have roughly 5-9 adults in them. Each group can choose whether to discuss a book, share a meal together, or find another way to support one another. These groups will meet through December 2024 and then we can assess what we want to do going forward. A family group and an individuals group is starting to take shape, and possibly a couples group as well. Reach out if you have questions!

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.

Every Sunday we all say together the Affirmation of Faith. This often includes "We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church."

Wait, What? I thought the Presbyterian Church split from the Catholic Church.

Apostolic? I thought we were Protestant.

So many questions here: the most obvious is the one about the catholic church. Note that the word "catholic" is not capitalized here (despite spellcheck and its relentless effort to change it to a capital!). There is a reason for this: catholic when it is not capitalized simply means universal. Capitalized, Catholic denotes a particular denomination like Roman Catholic.

But why is the word "Church" capitalized? When referring to the universal body of believers, as in *The Church*, we capitalize.

Apostolic simply means any church that carries on the tradition of the apostles. Not to be confused with the denomination calling itself *The Apostolic Church*.

February is for Love (along with the other 11 months)

by Rev. Pat Weatherwax

In the later 1960s the “modern” Christian music era was beginning to take form. One of the earliest and best folk hymns is “They’ll Know We are Christians by Our Love”.

We are one in the Spirit

We are one in the Lord

And they’ll know we are Christians

by our love, by our love.

Yes, they’ll know we are Christians, by our love.

(CCLI #20569735)

We consider that new song, but it is almost 60 years old. And the message is at least as old as the Gospel of John. In that gospel, in his closing remarks to his disciples it’s quite similarly, emphatically and yet simply stated. Jesus says:

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-5 NRSVUE

The gospel and the three letters attributed to John all include the direction to love, repeatedly. We need repetition because, sometimes, loving one another is hard. So I challenge you, in February, the month of red hearts candy and terms of endearment, to look for love, demonstrate love and humbly receive all the love others show you. Because:

God loves you, and so do I
Pat Weatherwax

KidsFirst

by Brooke Heck

The children's ministry wing has undergone a major transformation since the fall of 2022. The first phase was the painting of all of the halls to be bright, colorful, and inviting for the children when they come downstairs. We added new posters that promote inclusivity and diversity, and focused on a clean, simple aesthetic. The spring of 2023 we focused on the creation of a new classroom for our upper elementary students. We used the same color palette we introduced in the hallways, but incorporated them in a fun, engaging, wall of geometric shapes. We had items donated by members of the congregation as well as some that were purchased with the Christian Education fund to fully transform the space to be a room the kids could grow in their relationship with God each Sunday.

This year, my focus is on the large room in the children's wing! I have big ideas for this space and wanted to share them with you. Up until now, we have used this space as a catch all room. We have mostly used it for holiday events (Easter party, Christmas pageant rehearsal, Kids Night In activities) since I became the Sunday School Director. I know this room has so much more potential, but we will need the support of the congregation to do it! I envision this room being where the kids go to hang out after church. When they all come running back downstairs to play, this room will be their destination! I want there to be comfortable, colorful seating (couches, floor cushions, etc), engaging games (air hockey, foosball, pop-a-shot basketball), developmentally appropriate games and toys stored where they can access them, a library corner with Christian books and resources, and a mounted projector for our movie nights. This space will be another reason the kids are excited to come to church and they will feel the love of God permeate through the walls.

We are currently hosting a fundraiser (freeze dried candy available for purchase in the GPR on Sundays!) to raise additional funds to make this vision become a reality, but are also looking for any donations you may have that can help reduce costs! Please talk to Brooke if you have something sitting in your home that you feel may contribute to this space. Items may include cube shelves (preference for white), good condition couches, any of the games listed above, fun board games, puzzles, and toys for ages 5-12. I ask that anything donated be in good condition and you speak to Brooke prior to donating to see if the item can be utilized in this space.

Thank you for your continued support of KidsFirst, our children are so fortunate to have such a loving congregation surrounding them!



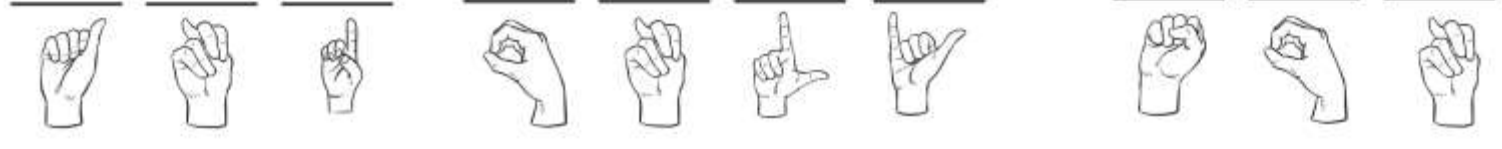
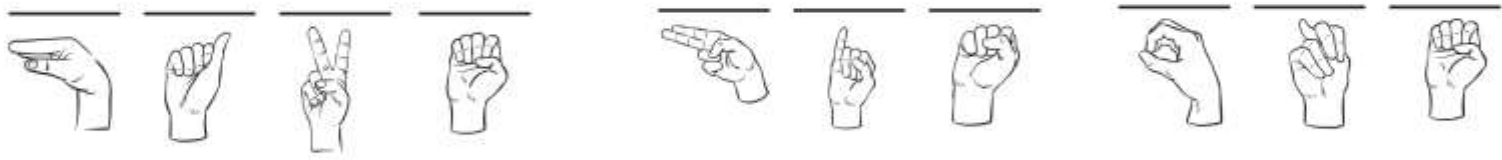
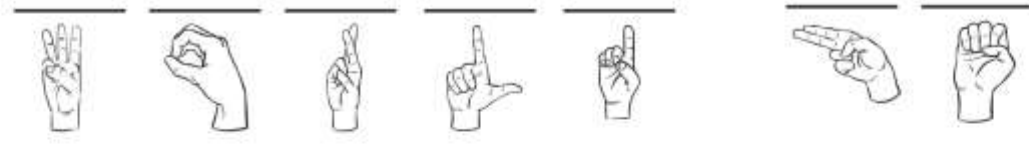
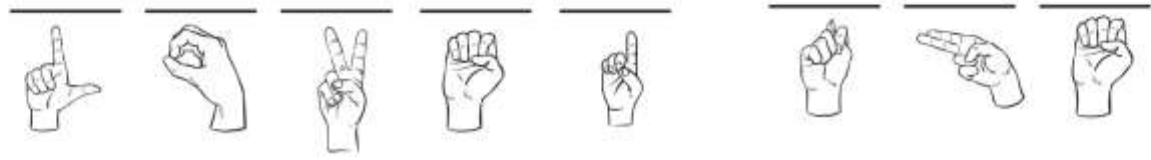
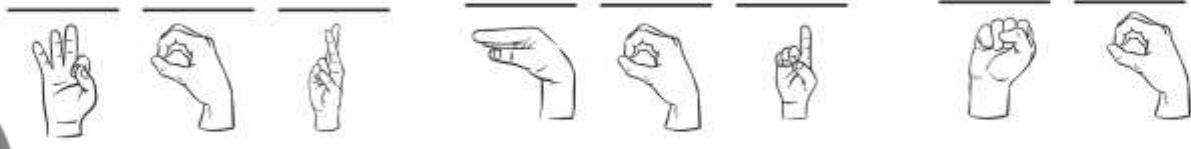
The need is constant.
The gratification is instant.
Give blood.

 **American Red Cross**
February 19
Noon to 6pm

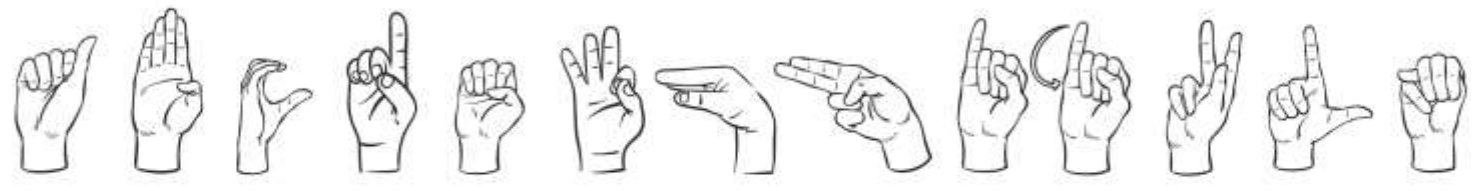
I give blood. Will you?

redcrossblood.org | 1-800-RED CROSS

DECIPHER THE BIBLE VERSE USING AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE!



A B C D E F G H I J K L M



N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z



First Presbyterian Church
8047 Church Street
Richland, MI 49083

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

FEBRUARY

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STAFF

Dr. Mark W. Jennings, Pastor
Reverend Pat Weatherwax, Parish Associate
Erin Jennings, Volunteer Assistant to the Pastor

Larry Myland, Director of Music
Andrea Large, Chancel Choir Director

Amber Beals, Coordinator of Small Group Ministries
Brooke Heck, Sunday School Director

Rachel Little, Office Manager
Karen Urban, Office Volunteer

Gretchen Ferris, Treasurer
Chris Gobble, Financial Secretary

Connie Slater, Sexton

Paul Gobble, Director of Communications
Jeremiah Smith and Zoe Gobble, Production