## FENTON FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

Growing in God WE COMMIT TO KNOWING JESUS THROUGH WORSHIP, BIBLE STUDY, AND PRAYER, ENCOURAGING CONTINUED SPIRITUAL GROWTH AS HIS DISCIPLES.

## The Best Gift to Give by Pastor Robbie Carnes



I have just finished reading an article entitled, "Why Young people are Leaving the Church and How we can help." I giggled at the title. I don't think we need any advice on how to help young people leave the church, we seem to be accomplishing that just fine on our own. Of course that is not the intention of the article, I just have a sick sense of humor.

Have you noticed that young people aren't as willing to be involved in communities of faith, as they have in the past? Have you ever thought about why that might be? While there are myriads of reasons why the Christian Church has seen decline in recent decades, the aforementioned article dwells on a very important one, character gaps. Simply said, character gaps are discrepancies between what we say we believe and how we act. When we stretch the truth, ignore rules, and sidestep guidelines we are not displaying good character and are susceptible to accusations of hypocrisy. It would seem that those who promote good character--through sermons, bible studies and service projects--but don't actually display that character in their lives are not very attractive

This shouldn't be a surprise, nobody respects a hypocrite. Especially when we are being less than honest with the source and purpose of good Character. If we treat Christian Character as a morality system that simply has great utility in our culture (rather than the result of discipleship in Jesus), then we are submitting to the idea that if the morality system is no longer useful it can be exchanged for another. Values that are untethered to spiritual reality can easily be sluffed off. In reality, Christian Character is the result of discipleship in the way of Jesus Christ, not a tool to get ahead in life.

## Hello & Welcome

The Church is not a building. It is a gathering of people brought together to experience God's love and purpose.

God designed the church for YOU – you belong here. Are you ready to experience a community of people doing life together? To find out, come worship with us on Sunday mornings.

Our Mission: To be a loving community of faith dedicated to helping people know Jesus Christ and grow, share, and serve as his disciples.

**Our Vision:** To provide an inviting and welcoming church home that attracts people of all ages and encourages positive growth, while creating an exciting and dynamic approach as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for worshipping with us! We are happy to welcome you into this household of God. We find that our society is shifting in the understanding of character. Character is seen of as secondary importance to getting what we desire and being perceived as what we desire. What we have (material goods, wealth, physical beauty) is far more important than who we are (resilience, spiritual maturity, selflessness). This results in the interior, emotional and spiritual struggles, that would overwise be addressed with 'character building exercises', being allow to metastasize. If we don't desire to have strong character, if our churches fail to form character, if we seek to be "world-famous rather than well-formed' we will constantly be subject to hypocrisy. Ultimately we will struggle to find answers the real questions in life if we never develop the character to seek answers.

There is a strong tendency in our present society to lift up genuineness and honesty above most things. Even if you are self-serving and egoistical, as long as you are true to yourself and honest about it, you will find permissive people in our culture. If you try to hide those things under a thin veil of religion your condemnation will be swift. Hypocrisy is our culture's unforgivable sin. It is easier to have no character at all then to act as if we do and be found out that in truth we are just as shallow as everyone else.

#### So, what can we do about it?

The first thing we need to do is cultivate trust with others and especially with young people. Humility will help us to come clean with the fact that the world doesn't leave many people with good reasons\, to trust others. However trust, which is the foundation for any relationship and character, is built through relationship. Trust requires consistency and closeness. Specifically with young people, but also for all of our relationships. We need to be in it for the long haul and we need to allow for others to really know us. Consistently treating people with dignity gives them confidence in your regard for them. That is trust.

We also need to model growth. Having people trust us is good, but actually being willing to express good character for those around us to witness is tough. None of us is perfect and all of us have fallen short of God's Glory. However, being honest about this and consistently reorienting our lives to that which we say we believe is modeling good character. Establishing rhythms of repenting and forgiving; of trespassing and extending grace will allow those witnessing your life to build trust in you. As they see your character, maybe their questions, doubts, mistakes and hurts could be shared and worked through. Maybe if they saw someone honestly struggling to live according their values, they could take up the struggle themselves.

Could this be the best gift you could give to those you love this holiday season? Strive to be a trustworthy person. Seek to be a model of living according to holy values. Filling character gaps and communicate the struggle and take responsibility for lapses into hypocrisy. Build good character in your own life by grappling with 'who you say you are and should be' in the face of your actions and your words.

For the young people in your life who are seeking an example to follow; For those who are just exploring a life of faith; For those who feel that their faith is all but dead; what could you give? Experiencing someone who is honest and open about nurturing integrity between their interior and exterior lives, between their hearts and their hands, between their beliefs and their actions, could be the best gift ever.

Here is a link to the article that I mentioned:

https://www.holypost.com/post/character-crisis-why-young-people-are-leaving-the-church-and-how-we-can-help

## WORSHIP WITH US HOW TO WORSHIP WITH US Join us online as well as in person Sunday's at 10am



## DECEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

**December 1st, 1st Sunday of Advent** Sermon: "You Are A Blessing"

December 8th, 2nd Sunday of Advent Sermon: "We can't go alone"

December 15th, 3rd Sunday of Advent Sermon: "Do the Good that is Yours to Do"

December 22nd, 4th Sunday of Advent Sermon: "Hope is worth the Risk"

December 24th, Christmas Eve Sermon: "Love Knows Your Name"

December 29th, 1st Sunday of Christmas Sermon: "Don't Forget to Laugh"

#### <u>Here is how to join us Online</u>

Facebook Live https://www.facebook.com/fentonfpc Closed Captioning Available

<u>YouTube</u> <u>https://www.youtube.com/@fentonfirstpresbyterianchurch</u> <u>Closed Captioning Available</u>

Zoom\_ https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8309142301? pwd=RHJ4dDBPdEhMN25yKzFzSzZNeUVPQT09 Meeting ID: 830 914 2301 Meeting Password: 5013 <u>Closed Captioning Available</u>

Use your telephone line to listen in Call +19292056099 and dial 8309142301# at the prompt US (New York) Or Call +13126266799 and dial 8309142301# at the prompt US (Chicago)



## 2024 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL COPIES AVAILABLE IN FELLOWSHIP HALL



Advent is a season of endings and beginnings.

As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving; and yet, the world as we know it spins madly on. Christ's birth offered a beautiful new beginning for shepherds and Magi alike—all the while, King Herod tried to bring Christ's story to an end.

When we ourselves navigate seasons filled with endings and beginnings, we need reminders. We need words that can feel like steady ground, like a path for our feet to find as we step forward into the unknown.

This years devotional is shaped around several reminders we all need from time to time: you are a blessing; we can't go alone; do the good that is yours to do; hope is worth the risk; These reminders root us in the fundamental truths of our faith. many

of them are life lessons we teach to children—lessons that adults continue to learn and relearn. They may resemble the blessings we impart to loved ones during special ceremonies like weddings or baptisms. And so, we invite you to move through this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead.

Read, look, and sing your way through the pages of this devotional. Each week we hope that given strength, courage, and grace. As you journey through this season, may you find words for belovedness and hope. May you find words for beginning again. For no matter what you are facing, no matter what this new day brings, love is your beginning.

The Advent journey unfolds like a well-worn quilt, each patchwork piece lovingly threaded across time and space. In each thread, we find blessed assurance that with every sacred stitch, God has been moving toward us all along.

This season reminds us that, what some may see as discarded scraps, the Maker of heaven and earth calls beautiful and blessed.

This Advent, consider your sacred place within the divine quilt.



## CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL AND WORSHIP INFORMATION Class begins at 10AM

Children return to worship after the sermon where they are welcome to sit with their parents or with Miss Tina. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Tina Ritchie.

## NOVEMBER TEACHERS

ELEMENTARY & PRESCHOOL/NURSERY tina Ritchie & Heidi Howieson / Heidi Roberts

"Out of Egypt" topics: Unit 4 – God's People in Egypt (Genesis, Exodus)

God used Joseph to provide for the people of ISrael and bring them into Egypt, which set the stage for a glorious demonstration of God's power to deliver. God raised up Moses to rescue God's people from slavery in Egypt. God saved God's people from physical captivity in Egypt like God would one day save God's people from spiritual captivity by sending Jesus, a Deliverer greater than Moses.

12/1 Joseph Explained Dreams
12/8 Joseph Saved His Family
12/15 Moses was Born and Called
12/22 The Plagues and the Passover
12/29 The Red Sea Crossing

**Big Picture Question:** Is there anything God cannot do? God can do all things according to God's character.

**Unit Key Verse:** Yet I have been the Lord your God ever since the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior. Hosea 13:4

#### Out of Egypt" topics: Unit 5 – Toward the Promise Land (Exodus)

Moses led God's people toward the promised land. God made a covenant with God's people and gave them laws to guide them in how to live and to help them understand God's perfect holiness. God's laws show that the only way to be right with God is through faith in Jesus, the only perfectly righteous One.

1/5 Bread from Heaven1/12 Jethro Helped Moses1/19 The Ten Commandments

**Big Picture Question:** What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving..

**Unit Key Verse:** Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:37-39



### 5 WAYS TO PREP YOUR FAMILY FOR THE BUSY HOLIDAY SEASON by minno

As the calendar flips from fall to the holidays, anticipation may start to fill your home and heart—but not necessarily the good kind! While Thanksgiving and Christmas mean celebrations and big family meals, adorable school plays, and (maybe too) many sweets, they can also bring complicated relational dynamics, overstimulation, greed, and the trap of comparison.

Scripture offers us abundant wisdom for every season, including the hubbub of the holidays. As parents and caregivers, we have the opportunity to shepherd children's hearts through the chaos and cheer of the next few months. A little early-season preparation will go a long way toward having a peaceful, Jesus-centered holiday season. Here are a few ways Scripture can guide us:

#### **Keep Busyness In Its Proper Place**

Regardless of how you feel about the holidays, they are guaranteed to be one thing: busy. An overloaded calendar can lead to a constant feeling of frenzy for you, which trickles down into your kids. When everything feels "unmissable," you have the opportunity to create a rhythm of rest around the holidays. At the beginning of the season, make a list of everything you could do. Then, as a family, set some guidelines for your calendar. These guidelines can be limits to how many nights a week you have events, or based on your budget, or letting each family member pick one special event and then saying "no" to the rest. And try not to over-commit to creating; kids won't remember if you make homemade treats for every event or if you buy packaged cookies at the store. **Ultimately, the best part of the holiday calendar is creating space for relationships to flourish and celebrating in community. Prioritize the people you get to spend time with, not the things you have to make or do.** 

When Jesus spent time with the sisters Martha and Mary in Luke 10, he spoke to this very thing. Mary rests at Jesus' feet, soaking in her time with Him. Martha rushes about preparing food, and complains to Jesus that Mary is not helping her. Jesus responds with, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion." (Luke 10:41-42, ESV)

## As you make your holiday plans this year, choose the good portion—time with Jesus and the people He has put into your life.

**Holiday Discipleship Tip:** Find simple ways to incorporate faith-building into your Thanksgiving and Christmas plans. Read a Bible verse or stop to pray in the midst of fun activities. When we include spiritual practices within everything we do during the holidays, our kids are reminded that it's all about Jesus!

#### Seek the Good of Your City and Neighbors

During the holidays, we can be inundated with calls to help and serve those less fortunate. Rather than just giving money this year, try intentionally seeking the good of people in your city and neighborhood who need extra support. Involving your children in serving others during the holidays teaches them that Jesus calls us to love and give, not just receive. Research places to volunteer together, and try to find organizations in your community where you could serve regularly throughout the year—not just during the holidays! Spend time praying as a family about how you want to steward any year-end giving funds that you may have set aside. Before receiving new gifts, sort through old clothes and toys and donate those in good condition to local organizations that will give them to children in your city.

1 John 3:16–18 (NIV) says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

**Holiday Discipleship Tip:** Pray about starting a new tradition of serving others in your community during the holiday season or even quarterly. Research shows that kids who serve with their families regularly are more likely to have a life-long walk with Jesus.

#### Prioritize Peace

Your family probably isn't perfect; in fact, relational tension often flares up at the holidays! And children can sense when things aren't right. Maybe you're nervous about political conversations at the dinner table or complicated parent-child relationships with older children or even adults. Colossians 3:12–14 (NIV) offers us wisdom for navigating these situations and more: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

**Prioritizing peace won't be complete or easy, but modeling forgiveness, honesty, compassion, humility, and patience will go a long way toward shaping your children's (and your!) heart in this season.** It's ok to mess up, to let an exasperated comment slip out or to step out of a heated room to take a deep breath. In fact, these moments of prioritizing peace and asking for the Lord's presence will be incredible teaching moments for your children!

**Holiday Discipleship Tip:** One of the most powerful ways we can model grace for our kids is to admit it when we need God's help and when we mess up. Don't be afraid to talk with your kids about some of the tension you may be feeling and how you are relying on God to help you show compassion and kindness when it's hard.

#### **Reframe Gift Giving**

Toy catalogs began appearing in my mailbox well before October this year! I immediately threw them away, because this year we are trying so hard as a family to limit the consumerism and accumulation of stuff that happens during the holidays. Gift giving is a beautiful practice that reminds us of the best gift we could ever receive: the gift of Jesus. But when the gifts become the goal, the holidays can feel like a race to shop, find the best deal, buy, order, wrap, open, play, lose, and give away a few months later. Does that sound familiar? Rather than making lists of what they want to receive, ask your children to make a list of people they want to give a gift to. Then encourage them to make those gifts with supplies you have around the house! Writing a poem, drawing a picture, or baking cookies can all be wonderful ways to show love without purchasing and accumulating things.

Paul reminds us in Acts 20:35 (NIV) that Jesus said, "'It is more blessed to give than to receive." Holiday Discipleship Tip: Consider adopting a limited, meaning-driven Christmas gift-giving strategy this year to help kids connect their gifts to the story of Jesus.

#### Focus on Jesus

I know it sounds cliche and it's easier said than done in the midst of all of the holiday craziness, but it's worth the reminder to bring our gaze back to the One we are celebrating in the first place. Even before the Advent and Christmas seasons dawn upon us, Thanksgiving is a time to share gratitude for all of the gifts He's given us—both relational and material. When we start early in the season to intentionally focus all of our activities, conversations, and even the gifts we give, around Jesus, we communicate clearly to our kids that He truly is the reason for the season.

If peace and joy are our goals for the holiday season, we can only find them in Him. Isaiah 25:3 (NLT) says, "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" When we focus on Jesus, He meets us with the gift of His presence, full of peace and joy, that will carry us through whatever we encounter this holiday season.

Find the original article here https://gominno.com/blog/5-ways-to-prep-your-family-for-the-busy-holiday-season/

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ADULT STUDIES



## ADULT STUDIES WILL TAKE A PAUSE DURING THE ADVENT SEASON.

## STUDIES WILL RESUME DURING JANUARY

**Sunday Evening Bible Study** - Beginning January 12 from 5 - 6:30PM 4square Tax & Accounting Conference room Led by Larry Zimbler, this group will discuss the book of Daniel. Bring your Bible and an open mind. Please see Larry for more information.

Join us in person at 4square Tax AND also on Zoom. <u>https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82961241969?pwd=M0IPMmxYU001SnQ0Z3cwV3h5Z1phdz09</u> Meeting ID: 829 6124 1969 Passcode: 017303

**Tuesday Morning Bible Study** - 11AM - 12:15PM in the Conference Room Led by Pastor Robbie, this group is viewing and discussing season 4 of The Chosen. The group will resume in January with a new topic. Watch for more details!

Growing in Love

WE MODEL CHRISTIAN LOVE TOWARDS EACH OTHER, PROVIDING AN INVITING AND WELCOMING SPIRITUAL HOME THAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE OF ALL AGES TO SHARE THEIR FAITH.

#### Youth Group Events for 6 - 12 graders & friends,

Meetings are generally Sundays in the Youth Room. Please see Tina if you are interested in helping at any event.

### Youth Group Summer Schedule

Incoming 6th graders - graduated seniors and our returning college friends are welcome to join us! Sign up for special events on the youth bulletin board or email <u>tina@ffpc.org</u>. Friends are always welcome; a parental consent form is needed for offsite events.

#### December

Sat 7, 2-5PM: Live Nativity and Jinglefest Sun 15: TBD Youth Christmas Party and gift exchange

**THANK YOU** to Jenn and Jon Wenzel for hosting pumpkin carving and bonfire night. We had a good discussion about a song Aletheia shared before dinner and carving. Behold our masterpieces!



## Ways to support Youth Group scholarships & activities

- Bottle returns Drop off your rinsed returnable bottles and cans to the youth room.
- Kroger Rewards Linking your Kroger Rewards card to FFPC is easy and earns us quarterly benefits. Contact the office if you need info on how to do this!

**THANK YOU** to Leah and Sam Carnes, Emily Hollopeter, Lucy Martin-Fanone, and Aletheia, Anastasia, and Azariah Thomas for their amazing help serving and cleaning up at the turkey dinner. You all ROCKED!!!

The Library Committee is hosting story time the 2nd Sunday of each month after worship in Fellowship Hall. Children, youth and adults are invited to hear and discuss a story of the month and check out books from the library! Folks interested in being a reader are asked to see Jenn Wenzel or sign up in Fellowship Hall!



# JINGLEIGST \* Live Nativity & Warming Genter



FREE FOR THE COMMUNITY! WARM UP WITH CRAFTS, COFFEE, HOT COCOA, COOKIES & POPCORN

DECEMBER 7TH 3PM-5PM

FENTON FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | 503 S. LEROY STREET | FENTON, MI 48430



Help Needed for our Live Nativity during Jinglefest Saturday, December 7 from 3-5pm in our courtyard Please see Cheryl Kopplin or Jeanne Cupp to choose your costume!

Sign up in Fellowship Hall to be an Angel, Mary, Joseph, or one of the Kings or Shepherds.







Join the YARN Wrappers Tuesdays at 1:00pm in the Adult Library Communion Table Flowers



A perfect way to honor a person, couple, or special occasion

Contact the Church Office or Heidi Roberts for more information

Happy Birthday

MICHAEL VANDERLIP DEC 1 Larry Zimbler Dec 10 Barbara Hungerford Dec 19 Melissa Browne Dec 21 Scott Rourke Dec 27 CAREY MUNTIN DEC 2 JIM MURRAY DEC 13 Mike Hussar Dec 19 Amber Danules Dec 21 Meghan Smith Dec 29 DOUG JACOBS DEC 8 Sarah Smith Dec 14 Mary Zimbler Dec 19 Dennis Beardslee Dec 25 John Foguth Dec 31 KAREN WENSEL DEC 8 NANCY BERGER DEC 19 Jill Hiscock DEC 20 Brandon McLive Dec 27 Don Kutchey Dec 31

Happy CAnniversary

JERRY & BEV WELCH DECEMBER 7 PAULA & HENRY GLOMSKI DECEMBER 29

## POINSETTIA TIME IS HERE!

All poinsettias are \$27.50 each. Order forms will be available beginning December 1st. Make checks payable to the First Presbyterian Church of Fenton. The form and check must be returned to the church office no later than December 15th, 2024.

## Growing in Community

WE ENGAGE WITH OUR WIDER COMMUNITY, SEEKING TO BE A CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE AND ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO FOLLOW JESUS THROUGH SERVICE IN MISSION AND OUTREACH ENDEAVORS.

## Spread hope this holiday!



#### Deacon's Christmas Project Samaritas Christmas Wish Program!

At Samaritas, we believe the children in our foster care, refugee foster care, and residential communities deserve a happy holiday like any other kid -- even if their guardians are having trouble making ends meet. They've earned the right.

#### **Gift Options**

- Buying specific gifts for one or more children, even for groups of brothers and sisters, who are part of the Samaritas Foster Care, Family Preservation, New Americans, or Affordable Living service lines.
- Donating toys to refugee children resettled through Samaritas' New Americans service line.

Contact Jay Kirkey or Mary Zimbler for more information



jiving Tree

LOCATED IN THE NEW NARTHEX, SPONSORED BY THE BOOK BINDERS.

SUGGESTED ITEMS ARE MITTENS, GLOVES, HATS, SCARVES, UNDERWEAR, SOCKS, PAJAMAS. ALL ITEMS ARE CHILDREN'S SIZES UP TO SIZE 6-18. THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS.



## Bell Ringers Needed!

Salvation Army Bell Ringing: Sign up in fellowship hall to ring the bell for an hour on December 14th. The donations collected not only help provide gifts to children who would otherwise go without during the holidays, but they also help provide food, shelter, and utility assistance to those who need it most every day of the year.



Christmas Joy Offering: God has blessed the Church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. This Special Offering addresses the support needed by some of our leaders, including supporting leadership development for communities of color, and provides support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need. Special envelopes will be included in the church bulletin on December 1st and 15th for the Christmas Joy offering.



Presbyterians joined Methodists on Sunday, November 24th, to put together buckets with cleaning supplies and make plarn for waterproof bags for flood victims.



#### **Refugee Welcome Update**

**Holidays...** we are planning to make holiday deliveries to all families on December 14th. We want to do something special for this first Christmas in Michigan! Each family will receive a platter of delicious homemade Christmas cookies, a grocery store gift card, and for families with children, a bag of clothing for each child. Clothing will be provided by Little Lambs Compassionate Ministry Center. Anyone is welcome to donate to the gift card fund. We are collecting until early December and will divide our total among the 21 families.

**Good news....** Holly High School Honor Society has elected to adopt one apartment complex of children for their holiday angel tree. They will provide a new gift for each child. Our Risen Lord Lutheran Church provided 15 amazing handmade quilts this month! And we are working on setting up volunteer led ESL classes! More on that in the future.

**Needs...** We are currently out of sets of silverware, kitchen utensils, and laundry baskets. Any of those items can be dropped off at First Presbyterian Church in Fenton.

**Next...** It is anticipated by Samaritas staff that December and early January will be quite busy with more arrivals. If anyone would like to get directly involved with the newly arrived families please <u>register</u> here and send me a message. There are always opportunities to give rides or to help someone practice their English language skills. As always, thank you all for your continued support!

Peace, Sarah

We have updated our Amazon Wish List

For more information, to donate, or to volunteer please visit <u>https://ffpc.org/samaritas/</u> or scan the code



## WAYS TO GIVE There are many different ways that you can give back to the

Fenton First Presbyterian Church. Together we can make a difference!!

**Online Giving:** An easy and convienent way to give. Just visit the Presbyterian Mission Exchange link in the Giving section of FFPC.org website. A fast and SECURE way to give back.

Church Giving: You can give during one of our services by placing your check or cash in the Sunday offering plates. When giving cash, please complete a giving envelope so we can properly record your gift.

Automatic Bank Pay: You can set up payments through your financial institution by utilizing the bill pay feature. Simply use First Presbyterian Church as the payee and your name for your account information. Saves on postage!!

Non-Cash Giving: Assets or Planned Gifts

Mail offering to Church:

Fenton First Presbyterian Church 503 S. Leroy Fenton, MI 48430

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION!