

FENTON FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
MARCH NEWSLETTER

Growing in God

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

Illusion of transparency by Pastor Robbie Carnes



Chances are, you have had a conversation (er... exchange?) with someone you disagreed with this past month. It should be a natural experience to converse with people of differing opinions. However, if that conversation is with someone who is especially toxic or narcissistic it can really be damaging. But what if we are the ones who are toxic or narcissistic? For the next few months I will be exploring how to avoid toxic and narcissistic behavior in our own lives. Using the book of Proverbs and an article from the BBC we will be looking at 5 different ways we can examine ourselves and seek to be better people and friends.

We all avoid conversation with certain people because we know the end result of that conversation will be negative. Allowing the dinner table discussion to slide into politics will always find Uncle Ted bluster about whatever policy or politician and the Hampton Cousins accusing him, and everyone else in the room, as being morally corrupt, political degenerate and socially obtuse. Avoiding speaking about things that are important can save us from argument, but tend to separate us by disengagement far more than we might suppose. Is it possible to have a civil and constructive conversation with people who do not agree with you?

I believe it is. We have no constructive power over people who are expressing toxic and narcissistic behavior. However, we do have power (and the moral duty) to examine our own behavior and avoid negative tendencies. This is especially important in our current, tense political atmosphere. How can we practically approach this?

How to avoid being a toxic friend
<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20241129-how-to-avoid-being-a-toxic-friend>

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.

Validating does not mean agreeing

A marker of a good relationship is one in which we feel secure to share our feelings. We 'try on' ideas and express emotions in a close relationship that would not be appropriate to share in a larger group. It is a natural and healthy thing to validate the feelings shared. This becomes very difficult when topics are circling politics and religion. These are subjects that bring up a variety of feelings, but we tend to mask our feelings by the intensity of our discussion. Attempting to be objective, we fail to talk about our true feelings. We can be so amped about the religious and political topics that we fail to identify personal feelings to the point that we may be unaware that we have feelings at all.

In our sickness we replace emotions with political alliances and theological slants. We can argue our points with the fervor and deeply wound each other because while we think we are discussing politics, theology or scriptural analysis, but the unacknowledged feelings seep out. Convolution abounds, we cease to be able to identify what is feeling and what is objective topic, and what should be polite dinner talk has devolved into an all out brawl.

In order to avoid toxic conversation it is important to ask, "How does that make you feel?" We can validate each others feelings without affirming each other's politics, but we need to identify those feelings first. We may never find agreement on particular policies, but we should be able to sympathize with each other when we say, "I fear such and such because of this and that." Taking the time to get to this place in a conversation can led to more healthy relationships.

Beware of Venting, discourage the Gossip

It is a passive toxicity when an individual is allowed to simply vent and all feelings are accepted and agreed with. While this creates an emotional bond in the moment it does not allow for the emotional growth that true reflection brings. Either the listener is parasitically feeding off of the other's emotion or the unfiltered emotion is left out in the air to grow fetid. A Spiritual perspective would suggest that sharing a revelation from God and discussing the meaning of such an event is only half-baked until you commit to actually doing something about how God has revealed himself to you. Revelation is only as helpful as the willingness to obey God's call. Venting our emotion is only good so far as there is proper reflection of why we might feel that and what it might mean to us. We need those who we are in conversation with to be willing to hold us accountable to what we have experienced and what we feel.

While it is clear that sharing feelings and receiving an empathetic response from a listener does ease stress. It allows us to safely 'process' experiences and share emotional weight. However, studies would suggest that emotional venting without an invitation to reflect can many times lead to damaging 'rumination' and a long-term increase in stress.

This is one of the reasons that Gossip can be so damaging. Gossip is very attractive. All of us want to be seen as knowledgeable and 'in the know'. Sharing unsubstantiated and/or negative perspectives about another person with a third person does create a temporary emotional connection. But if there is no reflection, no call to growth, no identification of the underlying feelings that are being masked by the gossip topic at hand, it can be just as destructive to the bearer of such information as to the subject of the gossip! Genuine relationships are not made, nor are they nurtured, by the sharing of Gossip. So how do should we act in light of this?

We find in Proverbs 27 a helpful thought:

*5 Better is open rebuke
than hidden love.*

*6 Well meant are the wounds a friend inflicts,
but profuse are the kisses of an enemy.*

This doesn't seem like a safe idea. Uncle Ted isn't going to take kindly to 'open rebukes'. How does this create healthy relationships? How can we be successful in our roles of encouraging reflection?

Much depends on the quality of relationship that you have with the other person. Ethan Kross at the University of Michigan has a few questions that may help us.

- Looking at the situation, could you tell me why this event was stressful to you?
What is really being expressed here? What emotions are in play? What ultimate concerns are being threatened?
- Have you learned anything from this experience, and if so, would you mind sharing it with me?
This is a respectful question that encourages reflection. Even if we don't agree with someone we might learn from them.
- In the grand scheme of things, if you look at the "big picture", does that help you make sense of this experience?
Why or why not?

When we talk about 'processing' emotions or experiences (specially in a Spiritual sense) we mean we are fixing meaning to those emotions and experiences. This allows us to consider the emotion or experience in its proper proportion and react accordingly. We can 'get through' a great amount of trauma and grief, but not by discounting, masking or misrepresenting our feelings.

Colossians 1: 28 So we preach Christ to everyone. With all possible wisdom we warn and teach them in order to bring each one into God's presence as a mature individual in union with Christ. 29 To get this done I toil and struggle, using the mighty strength which Christ supplies and which is at work in me.



WORSHIP

HOW TO WORSHIP WITH US

Join us online as well as in person Sunday's at 10am



MARCH WORSHIP SCHEDULE

March 2nd Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday
The Four Loves: Affection

March 5th Ash Wednesday - Prayer Stations

March 9th 1st Sunday in Lent
Journey to the Cross: The Last Supper

March 16th 2nd Sunday in Lent
Journey to the Cross: Peter's Denial

March 23rd 3rd Sunday in Lent
Journey to the Cross: From Darkness to Light

March 30th 4th Sunday in Lent
Journey to the Cross: Insults and Paradise

Here is how to join us Online

Facebook Live

<https://www.facebook.com/fentonfpc>

Closed Captioning Available

YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/@fentonfirstpresbyterianchurch>

Closed Captioning Available

Zoom

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8309142301?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8309142301?pwd=RHJ4dDBPdEhMN25yKzFzSzZNeUVPQT09)

[pwd=RHJ4dDBPdEhMN25yKzFzSzZNeUVPQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8309142301?pwd=RHJ4dDBPdEhMN25yKzFzSzZNeUVPQT09)

Meeting ID: 830 914 2301 Meeting Password: 5013

Closed Captioning Available

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).

Worship is announcing 2025 Lenten & Easter events

- March 5th Ash Wednesday
- March 13th Simple meals start
- April 13th Palm Sunday
- April 17th Maundy Thursday
- April 18th Good Friday service at United Methodist Church starting at 12:00
- April 20th Easter Sunday

Keep an eye out for more exciting information.



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.

MARCH TEACHERS

ELEMENTARY & PRESCHOOL/NURSERY

PJ Collier & Heidi Roberts/
Heidi Howieson

APRIL TEACHERS

ELEMENTARY & PRESCHOOL/NURSERY

Tina Ritchie & Heidi
Roberts/Heidi Howieson

“Into the Promised Land” topics:
Unit 7 – Wandering in the Wilderness
(Numbers, Deuteronomy)

Israel doubted and disobeyed God, yet God still planned to bless them. God was with God's people as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Finally, God led them back to the promised land. God later sent Jesus so that even disobedient doubters can trust in Him and receive His promised eternal rest.

3/2 Balaam and Balak
3/9 Moses' Farewell

Big Picture Question: What does it mean to sin? To sin is to think, speak, or behave in any way that goes against God and God's commands.

Unit Key Verse: Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight. ~ Proverbs 3: 5-6

“Into the Promised Land” topics:
Unit 8 – Conquering the Land
(Joshua)

The Israelites needed to conquer the promised land, aso God fought for God's people. Joshua led and encouraged the people to be faithful to the one true God. Under Joshua's leadership, the people conquered the promised land and began to live in it. Joshua was a representation of Christ, leading the Israelites to victory in Canaan as Jesus leads us to victory in overcoming the world.

3/16 Crossing the Jordan
3/23 The Battle of Jericho
3/30 Taking the Land

Big Picture Question: How can we glorify God? We can glorify God by loving and obeying God.

Unit Key Verse: It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.
Deuteronomy 31:8



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

ADULT STUDIES



Lenten Simple Meals - Lead Us Not into Temptation

Thursday Evenings, March 13 - April 10, 5:30pm-7:00pm

This Lenten season we will be studying the Gospel selections of the Lectionary. Each scripture passage reveals a Story that presents a temptation to the characters. We will be looking at these passages, asking ourselves how we might be vulnerable to these pernicious temptations and how we might turn and live more faithfully together as God's people.

Women's Studies - April Women's Bible Study

Perfectly Flawed: God Transforms our Weaknesses in Strengths

Wednesday mornings April 23 May 28 from 10am - NOON

This class meets in the Conference Room and is facilitated by Tina Ritchie

OR

Thursday evenings April 24 through May 29 from 6:30 - 8:30PM

This class meets via zoom and is facilitated by Dee Dee Ainsworth

Learn to persevere in your faith, live confidently, and boldly step into God's purpose for you.

This study shows how the apostle Peter's passion and imperfections make him one of the Bible's most loved and relatable people. Even when Peter gave up, gave in, and gave out, Jesus was there for him. Join Lisa as she follows Peter through his time with Jesus, from the beginning of Jesus's ministry to the Resurrection and on through Pentecost when Peter begins to live into his call. Along the way, discover the raw honesty of a man who veered from staunch devotion to moments of doubt, mirroring our own human struggles.

Peter's story is an invitation to embrace imperfection, find strength in the relentless grace of God, and discover how each one of us is perfectly flawed but still deeply loved by God.

Participant book is \$14 - Register by April 6

A white rectangular box containing the handwritten text "invite a friend" in a cursive, grey font. A simple grey arrow points downwards from the word "friend".

Sunday Evening Bible Study Starting March 23rd

“Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewishness of Jesus can transform your faith.”

by Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg.

Led by Larry Zimble

5 - 6:30PM in the 4square Tax & Accounting Conference room

Zoom participation in available upon request. Please see Rabbi Larry for more information

A rare chance to know Jesus as his first disciples knew him.

What would it be like to journey back to the first century and sit at the feet of Rabbi Jesus as one of his Jewish disciples? How would your understanding of the gospel have been shaped by the customs, beliefs, and traditions of the Jewish culture in which you lived?

Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus takes you on a fascinating tour of the Jewish world of Jesus, offering inspirational insights that can transform your faith. Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg paint powerful scenes from Jesus’ ministry, immersing you in the prayers, feasts, history, culture, and customs that shaped Jesus and those who followed him.

You will hear the parables as they must have sounded to first-century Jews, powerful and surprising. You will join the conversations that were already going on among the rabbis of his day. You will watch with new understanding as the events of his life unfold. And you will emerge with new excitement about the roots of your own Christian faith.

Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus will change the way you read Scripture and deepen your understanding of the life of Jesus. It will also help you to adapt the rich prayers and customs you learn about to your own life, in ways that both respect and enrich your Christian faith.

By looking at the Jewishness of Jesus, Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg take you on a captivating journey into the heart of Judaism, one that is both balanced and insightful, helping you to better understand and appreciate your own faith.

Tuesday Morning Bible Study

11AM - 12:15PM in the FFPC Conference Room

Led by Pastor Robbie, this class will resume April 22 after taking a break through Lent and Easter.

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

Our mission statement:

To create space for youth to ask questions, encounter God and learn to live as disciples of Christ.

ALLOW, MEET, AND GO!

Youth Group Events for 6 - 12 graders & friends,

Sign up for special events on the youth bulletin board or email tina@ffpc.org.

Friends are always welcome; a parental consent form is needed for lock-ins and offsite events.

Watch your texts and email or contact Tina Ritchie for more information. Adults seeking to be part of the program are asked to see Tina.

March

Sun 9, 4-6PM: Youth Group

*Sat 22, 9AM-12PM: Food Bank of Eastern Michigan

April

Sun 13, 4-6PM: Youth Group

Sun 27, 4-6PM: Youth Group

THANK YOU Congregation!

Youth Group raised \$704.69 for youth scholarships from the Fudgeraiser.

We also collected 57 food items for the Center of Hope and \$452 to purchase grocery gift cards for Samaritas families.

Your generosity makes a world of difference in the lives of many <3

Story Time in Fellowship Hall!

The Library Committee is hosting story time the 2nd Sunday of each month after worship. 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.

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!

SAVE THE DATE

2025 Congregational Outreach Activities*

Potato Bake: Sunday, March 16

Pizza/Game Night: April 12

Women's Tea: Saturday, May 3

Mother's Day: Sunday May 11

Father's Day: Sunday, June 15

Picnic: Sunday, July 27 at Marilee Smiley's lake home

Ice Cream Social Sunday, August 17

Pizza/Game Night: Saturday, September 13

Halloween Candy Handout: October TBD

Apple/Umpkin: Sunday, October 26

Jingle Fest Welcome Center: Saturday, December 6

Turkey dinner: Saturday, November 8

Men's Luncheon: date TBD

Women's Luncheon: date TBD

*Dates may be subject to change or be cancelled

ANNUAL

Potato Bake

03.16.2025

AFTER WORSHIP

**SIGN-UP IN FELLOWSHIP
HALL TO BRING IN YOUR
FAVORITE TOPPINGS**

Bring a friend!





FENTON FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

LOOKING FOR CHOIR MEMBERS

PRaise THE LORD THROUGH MUSIC PRaise THE LORD THROUGH MUSIC

If you have a passion for singing and/or ringing, join us!

Practice With Us Wednesday Evenings
Adult Chancel Choir - 7:30pm-9:00pm
Adult Hand Bell Choir 6:30pm-7:15pm



FFPC YOUTH CHOIR

PRACTICE WITH US SUNDAY'S
AFTER WORSHIP



Yarn Rappers

Do you knit or crochet, or would you like to learn?



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

CHARMAINE THORLEY MAR 1
GUY COWING MAR 5
JOHN MALONEY MAR 11
DEBORAH VANDERLIP MAR 19
OLIVIA KIRKEY MAR 24

MAUREEN UTT MAR 1
MAGGIE HODGKIN MAR 8
REBECCA S. RUPPERT MAR 14
JACK ALLEN MAR 22
SHARON COWING MAR 25

LOGAN KIRKEY MAR 3
PHYLLIS CMEJREK MAR 11
JAN FOSTER MAR 16
HENRY GLOMSKI MAR 22
SCOTT GROSSMEYER MAR 25

BOB BROWDER MAR 5
TONY GRAMS MAR 11
JUDY HOPE MAR 16
PAM ANDERSEN MAR 23
RHONDA MOORE MAR 26

Happy Anniversary

DOUG & JAN JACOBS MARCH 3

JAMES & JAN FOSTER MARCH 29

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.



ZONTA

CLUB OF
FENTON AREA

MEMBER OF ZONTA INTERNATIONAL

EMPOWERING WOMEN

THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY

Saturday, March 8th, is International Women's Day. Join the Zonta Club of Fenton at 9:30am for coffee and donuts in Fellowship Hall and learn all about the club. Absolutely no obligation.



Food Bank of Eastern Michigan Volunteer Opportunity - Saturday, March 22nd, 9am until noon. Our local food bank is an award-winning food bank that serves a network of nearly 600 hunger relief partners in 22 counties. They depend on local volunteers to help; and these are always fun, productive events. Sign up in fellowship hall.

Refugee Welcome Team

MAKING MICHIGAN HOME

Refugee Welcome Update

February News...

Our English class is really taking off! Each week there are between 20 and 30 students working diligently. There are a few needs here that we would like to meet: help with transportation and donations for supplies (workbooks, pencils, paper, childcare, transportation costs). If you are interested in volunteering or donating please contact me directly.

In addition to English class we have also been active delivering furniture and providing transportation to and from appointments and classes. Thank you to all who donated, picked up, and/or delivered this month!

Looking forward...

I'm certain that you all have seen news regarding funding and policy for refugees. Because of these recent and abrupt changes we have not received any new families or individuals since mid-January. It is unclear when this will resolve. Until then we will continue to support those who are here with us.

Additionally the changes have impacted the families who most recently arrived in Michigan. Funds that were dedicated to these families were frozen before they were able to be utilized and this leaves several families with financial burdens. Samaritas staff have worked around the clock to secure emergency funding, but it is still very difficult and stressful. Normally upon arrival a refugee receives 90 days of intense support from Samaritas and their resettlement allowance (roughly \$1100 per person). This gives them a needed cushion as they adjust to a new home and look for employment. At this time we are actively looking for any and all job leads in the Flint area. If anyone has ideas for funding sources or jobs please let me know.



Now some good news! A very generous donor gifted a car to one of our families. Jesus and Zoraida are ecstatic to have a car of their own! You can see their joy in the photo below.

Finally I would like to address a question that has come up frequently in the past weeks: the families with whom we are working are here legally. They applied for and received refugee status before arriving in the US. Most have been stateless for years having fled dangerous circumstances in their home countries. They all went through the appropriate channels to be granted refuge here.

I also want to share our group's Immediate Needs:

- Support of English Class (see above)
- Delivery of furniture on 2/22/25- from Fenton to Flint
- Delivery of a box of housewares- date is flexible- from Fenton to Flint
- Bus Orientation- We need someone who is willing to take a bus ride with new arrivals to demonstrate how to utilize MTA, payments, routes, apps, etc.
- Toiletries: we have been asked to help with toiletries which can be cost prohibitive. Donations of items and also money are accepted.
-

If you are interested in helping with any of these please contact me. I look forward to hearing from you!

Peace,
Sarah



We have updated our Amazon Wish List

For more information, to donate, or to
volunteer please visit

<https://ffpc.org/samaritas/>

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 convenient 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!