



Christmas Eve at 4:00p: A Nativity Story. Come as you are to this simple, informal, family-friendly service. We'll sing carols and listen to the Christmas story with special music from our Children's Choir and Youth Ensemble. The service will last an hour. Optional childcare for children under the age of 3 will be available.

Christmas Eve at 7:30p: A Festival of Lessons & Carols. First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor presents a Festival of Lessons and Carols, modeled on the world-famous carol service from King's College in Cambridge, England. Come hear the Christmas story, join in singing beloved Christmas carols, and enjoy beautiful music from our choir and organist.



Dear friends,

Only Pastor Paul can make a [message about money](#) sound holy and sacred. If you'll allow me, as moderator, let me add some thoughts to his important words.

As you may know, ours is a congregation-led church. As such, we have seven boards, composed of a chair and usually, four or five other members. The chairs, or other board representatives, compose our Executive Council, along with our church clerk and three church members at large. One of the boards, the Board of Trustees, has 12 members. The remaining boards are: Worship, Outreach, Mission Action, Music and Arts, Christian Education, and Care and Community. These boards submit budgets every year as "realistic wish lists" for the work they intend to do.

This year's budget committee (newly formed every year just prior to Stewardship season and adjourned in February) concurs with the Board of Trustees and the personnel committee that salaries and benefits, along with payments to our independent contractors (choir section leaders and nursery caregiver) will not be considered for budget reductions. But I have asked all the boards to re-think their budgets with an eye toward dramatically cutting costs.

Their responses mean some fairly dramatic cuts to our programs unless we increase our revenues through pledges. Below are some examples of impact.

Our outward focus financially supporting nonprofits who offer affordable housing and healthcare to our most vulnerable neighbors will take a hit, including our partners AMOS Health & Hope and Hope Clinic. (Mission Action Board)

Formation experiences for all ages will need to scale back. We will no longer be able to fund youth retreats and need to rely solely on designated funds if they're available, to fund service-learning trips. We currently have 15 teens and adults planning to return to AMOS Health and Hope in Nicaragua this summer for the first time since the pandemic. (Board of Christian Education)

Our community gatherings for children, youth, and adults - fellowship time, annual

advent event, annual meetings, Pizza in the Park, Faith and Family small group, etc. - will include a fee, will be potlucks, and/or will be canceled. (Board of Christian Education and Care and Community)

Our gatherings to honor and celebrate life events, memorial luncheons and baby celebrations, will not include food provided by the church. (Care and Community)

Our care of our instruments used in worship, organ and piano, will be less frequent and likely therefore more expensive in the long run. (Board of Music and Arts)

Our commitment to accessible and hybrid worship will be difficult without funds to repair, replace, and/or upgrade our sound and live-stream equipment. (Board of Worship)

Our outreach to express God's love and FBCA2's welcome at UM's Festifall and Pride Ann Arbor will be limited. (Board of Outreach)

Our stewardship of the space and grounds - maintenance and custodial - would need to continue moving towards volunteer efforts. Delayed maintenance often leads to increased expense in the long run. (Board of Trustees)

At the same time we are asking Boards to make cuts to their budget requests, we are pursuing opportunities to increase revenue like raising air garage rates, looking for a new preschool tenant, and applying for grants when applicable.

But the bottom line is we are congregation-led and congregation-funded. And oh are we a generous, loving, giving bunch. Already we are receiving renewed and increased pledges. When I see what you all are giving, what the boards are willing to do without, and how unified we are in solving this problem I can only marvel at what a God-centered, other-prioritized, wonderful group of people. As I echo Paul in asking you to consider raising your pledge or pledging for the first time or renewing your pledge, I do so with love and thanksgiving.

Bless you in advance for your prayerful consideration of our request,

Robbie Stapleton

Moderator

JANUARY ADULT FORMATION

Starting January 7



During the month of January, Pastor Paul will be leading a discussion of *Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved* by Kate Bowler. We hope you'll join us for this conversation and time of connection each Sunday in January (11:30-12:30p). Books are available to purchase (\$15/book) at church; swing by the ministry station and pick one up this Sunday or next. There's also a limited time [Amazon Kindle deal](#) on the book right now for \$2.99!

Kate Bowler, a professor at Duke Divinity school specializing in the prosperity gospel, was living a "blessed" life: At thirty-five, she had a great job, a loving husband, and a new baby. Then she is diagnosed with Stage IV colon cancer. Forced to reckon with her mortality, she faces the limits of the prosperity gospel and the can-do spirit it celebrates. Is illness a moral failure? What does it mean to die in a society that insists everything happens for a reason? Kate is stripped of this certainty and discovers that without it, life is hard but beautiful in a way it never has been before.

CONGREGATIONAL NOTES

Overnight Rotating Shelter. This week we are hosting the Overnight Rotating Shelter. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to make it happen. A special thank you to all the children and youth who made a meal for the first night. And a big shout out to Amanda Shutko, who coordinated all the preparations! It's so valuable for our children to learn what it means to care for vulnerable members of our community.



The **FBC Ladies' Book Club** will next meet on **Tuesday, January 23rd at 6:30 pm** to discuss *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck, location TBA. Please do not hesitate to contact [Janice Stumpf](#) or [Mary Gregg](#) if you have any questions. All ladies are welcome!

PRAYER REQUESTS. Praying together is a core element of our life together. Each Sunday during worship (10:00a on our [Facebook page](#), [YouTube channel](#), and in person), we pray for those we know to pray for by name during the Prayers of the People. You are invited to share prayer requests/praises using [this form](#).

Retired Ministers & Missionaries Offering



RMMO2023: Good will come.

*“Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely,
who conduct their affairs with justice.” — Psalm 112: 5 (NIV)*

Through the month of December, we will be taking contributions to the **Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO)**. RMMO is a congregational offering and a joint project of ABC-USA and MMBB. Collected annually in December from participating congregations, RMMO funds are distributed as “Thank You” checks to ABC-USA retired ordained ministers and commissioned missionaries who have devoted 15 years or more to our denomination, as well as surviving spouses. If you donate by check, please write it to FBC and indicate RMMO in the memo line. If a cash donation, please use the envelopes located in the pews. Thank you for your generosity.

COME BREAK BREAD AND LEARN ABOUT DWC!



The DWC is an interfaith community project supporting unhoused neighbors in Washtenaw County. DWC is inviting people from the many faith communities that have had our back the last ten years, and from faith communities curious about the project to share a free meal with us.

You're invited to dinner at Journey of Faith Church from 6pm -8pm on Friday January 5th. There will be vegan and gluten free options, please get in touch if you have other dietary restrictions! Optional RSVP to dwcwash@gmail.com or 309-696-0955.

NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE AND DEADLINE. The next newsletter will be Thursday, January 4. Deadline for submissions is Tuesday, January 2.

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