



Congregational Courier

THOUGHTS FROM BOB LIVINGSTON

SENIOR MINISTER

Dear Friends:

One of our church's core values is *Caring*—we are a loving and mutually supportive faith community.

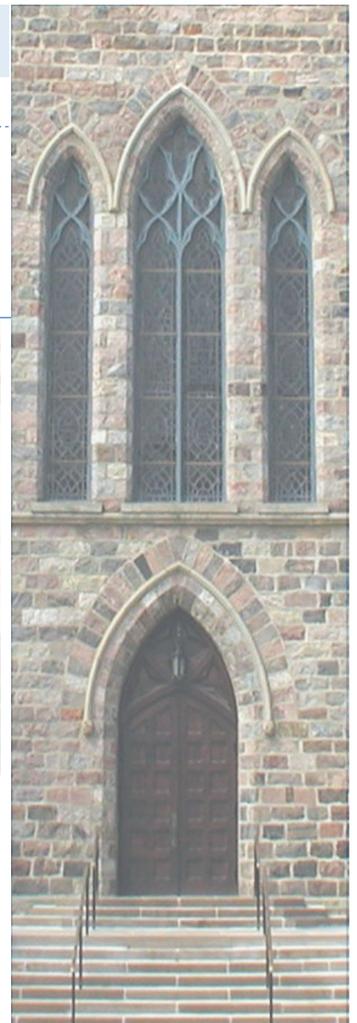
This month I would like to celebrate the way we care for others. As you know, for the third year in a row, our church has hosted a warming shelter on each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during the month of February. This has been a compassionate outreach of our church to those in need of a warm place to be and a supportive community to embrace. I must say, it has been an interesting mix of people...of all ages and types! However, I think what has impressed me most is the way this diverse group of people love, serve, and care for one another. Within the group there is a great spirit of compassion and sympathy...which you can see in the concern they show to one another, the lively conversations in which they engage and connect with one another, and the noble acts of kindness they extend to one another. In a very beautiful way they fulfill the petition of the famous prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, "O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to understand as to be understood; to be loved as to love."

I am proud of our church for undertaking such a caring ministry here! I am particularly indebted to Pam Dabbs and Connie Nagle, who took upon themselves the lions-share of the responsibility and leadership, to the scores of people who donated volunteer time and resources (food, beverages, and financial support) to the warming shelter, and to the Missions and Outreach committee who, as a committee, sets the vision for the many caring and helping projects we undertake as a church.

How nice to be a church that cares!

The happy faces I saw and the plentiful comments of gratitude I heard are a testimony to all of this.

Blessings,

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DARCY CRAIN-POLLY

ASSOCIATE MINISTER



Gratitude on the Journey

There is a strange spiritual irony that occurs when you're a pastor. You struggle with something personally and God hands you a text to preach that is exactly what you need to confront or comforted by. It's unavoidable. A month or two ago, I did a skit about how sometimes you really are dealt more than you can handle; not that it's God who is doling out the stressors, but life. In that sermon Bob eloquently articulated that it was not God who was piling on all that overwhelms, but God who gives you people to help cope with it. You all, my wonderful church family, were slightly alarmed that the skit was factual; that perhaps I really was dealing with more than I could handle. I wasn't, at least at the time of that skit.

Then, with life transitions and the death of my grandmother and the selling and buying of new homes, I suddenly felt like the character I played in that skit. There was way more piled on than I felt equipped to handle. You are the people that God has graciously gifted me with, and you all have flooded my life with compassion and kindness. I have received cards and flowers and ice cream; groceries, hugs, texts, and emails. You have offered grace and kindness. The strong and steadfast friends that happen to be staff members at FCC arrived as a team of support during my grandmother's funeral. Our talented pianist, Rebecca Jones, agreed to trek out to Livonia to play for the service and did so beautifully. For someone whose mantra is "suck it up cupcake," it has often been difficult for me to accept help and generosity, despite how easy it is to encourage others to do the same. Looking back on a couple months that held incredible personal pain and struggle, I am incredibly grateful. I am humbled. I am blessed. Thank you.

March 1 marks the start of our Lenten journey. We place ashes on our foreheads to remember our mortality and humanity. On our journey we deny some of who we are and what we want and pour ourselves into who God is and what God wants with our lives. More than ever before I feel prepared to walk this road to the cross, and I am honored to help lead you on that same journey.

Perhaps, like myself, you had a heavy month, or two, or twenty-four. My prayer is that you too experienced the grace and love of God through the kindness and generosity of friends and family. As you embark on the Lenten journey, and we follow our Lord who was both fully human and fully divine to Jerusalem, may we reflect on our own humanity; our own weakness. For God so loved us that he created us for love; love in spite of, love for one another, love, in fact, wins. Every time. Every journey. Every transition. Thanks be to the God who so loved the world.

Darcy

SARAH CHAFFEE

DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Happy March!

I have had the privilege of taking an Old Testament course this semester. Here is an excerpt from my first paper:

Throughout history, God has shown himself to his people. God has initiated relationships and covenants. God has spoken through a burning bush and through quiet whispers. His relationship with His people is formed and developed through the stories in Genesis. Through these stories, we see a pattern of punishment followed by forgiveness, of judgment followed by grace. We are introduced to God’s love for his people and we see a pattern of behavior that continues throughout much of the Bible. We start to see a cycle that is partially, if not fully, followed in many of the stories of the Old Testament. God shows his desires for His people, humankind is disobedient and self-serving, God judges and punishes, and finally God displays his promises of love, grace, and forgiveness. We begin to see God’s will for his



people and their inability to be fully obedient to it. We see many conditions of the human heart like greed, pride, guilt, and anger. We also see many of the characteristics of God. These characteristics are introduced in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, but are maintained throughout history and even to this day. These stories did not just happen one time at one point in history, they happen every day to each of us. We experience these human conditions and are shown the consequences of our disobedience. However, despite our disobedience, God daily enters into relationships with us. Our disobedience does not

negate what God has created in us or ruin His relationship with us. God gives us more chances – He is always gracious and is always forgiving. God initiated relationships with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and all of humankind, and He continues to initiate relationships and covenants with his people today.

Sarah

FCC Vision Statement: We strive to be a joyous spiritual home, welcoming and valuing all people, embracing God’s word and enriching lives.

FCC, FOOD GATHERERS, AND MASTER GARDENERS

What do these three things have in common? With a little luck this spring, a lot! As most of you know, FCC's "Grow-A-Row" initiative is rolling into its third year. Our first year of contributing to Food Gatherers was strictly a home garden activity. Our second year involved using seedlings provided by Food Gatherers to plant in pots at a volunteer Sunday in May which were sent home with members of our congregation. Some plants remained at the church and were cared for by staff and members. We have been able to provide Food Gatherers over 400 pounds of produce during this time! A remarkable bounty, but we can do better.

Connie Nagle has been kind enough to take the lead on preparing an application for a Community Gardening grant from Washtenaw Master Gardeners (formerly Master Gardener Alumni Association of Washtenaw County). This year, we would like to expand our urban garden with a raised garden bed. Our objective is to encourage onsite urban gardening, foster the spirit of volunteerism, and inspire individuals and families to take an interest in plant care. This in turn will increase our bounty of produce donation. Our adult members will work together with our church school children and parents to assemble our raised bed, choose plants and seeds, plant, water, weed, harvest, and donate our bounty. Our entire congregation will be able to watch our garden grow throughout the summer months, developing a vested interest in helping this community while supporting the great need that Food Gatherers is so diligently committed to providing our community. A raised garden will help church members participate who find kneeling and bending troublesome. All participants will learn which plants do well in this type of environment. This initiative would be an expansion to our actively developing program.

Are you a master gardener? If funded, one of the requirements is that we participate under the direction of a master gardener. Washtenaw Master Gardeners is willing to engage a master gardener for the project, but we would be thrilled to have an FCC member serve as our master gardener. If you are interested, please reach out to Connie Nagle at dangle@comcast.net.

Our Mission: We are a beacon of God's love, hope, and Christian freedom

YOUTH MINISTRIES

Middle School Events Schedule

March 26	6-8 p.m.	Girls Night
April 12	5:30-7:30 p.m.	All FCC Families Food Gatherers
May 21	6-8 p.m.	Girls Night
June 4	1-4 p.m.	Canoe Trip

SH Discussion Schedule

March 5	Jesus—The Person
March 12	Jesus—Flipping Tables
March 19	Jesus—Theology of the Cross
March 26	No High School Discussion Family Worship Sunday

Confirmation Class Schedule

March 12	Confirmation Class
March 26	Confirmation Class (TBD)

ANN ARBOR MARATHON

CHURCH ACCESSIBILITY

This year the Ann Arbor Marathon will be held on March 26. It begins at 7:30 a.m. and will once again challenge our accessibility to drive and park. The marathon, combined with the 170th Anniversary of FCC, led us to the decision to move the 9 a.m. Change of Pace Service to be a part of the Saturday evening Anniversary event on March 25. We WILL have chapel communion at 9:30 a.m. and our traditional 10 a.m. service in the sanctuary, although please keep in mind that the area immediately surrounding FCC will be heavily impacted by the Ann Arbor Marathon.

The following intersections will be barricaded:

Main Street and Liberty	Fourth Street south of Washington	Division and William
Main Street and William	Fifth Street south of Washington	Thompson and William
Main Street and Madison	Fifth Street South of William	Maynard and William
Washington south of State	Washtenaw and Church	East U and South U
Monroe and Tappan	Monroe and Oakland	Hill and State

SKI RETREAT

REPORT

If you missed out on this year's inaugural FCC Ski Retreat, mark your calendars for next year's President's Day Weekend. The retreat was a blast! We enjoyed both cross country and downhill skiing, in a fluke 50 degree weekend with snow on the ground. At the lodge, which you could ski right up to, we enjoyed a block of rooms and a large common room for games, breakfasts, and lunches.



At night we ventured into downtown Gaylord and enjoyed a group dinner at Snowbelt Brewery. On Sunday morning we gathered for a worship service in our common room and with refreshed spirits and open hearts went about our days on snowshoes, skis, or heading home.

Hope you can join us next year!



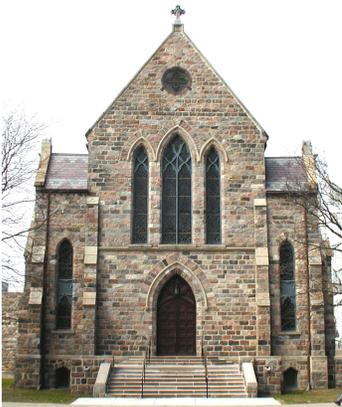
CHURCH HISTORIAN

BETTY BISHOP

Our Early Beginnings

As we approach the 170th anniversary of the founding of FCC on March 23, 1847, it is worth looking back to events of 1847-1876.

On February 9, 1847 48 members of the Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor met to take formal steps to start a new church. They preferred the Congregational form of government (which some were used to from New England), were more ardent in their anti-slavery feelings than the current Presbyterian minister, and disliked a recent series of revival meetings. Within two weeks they bought a plot of land – for \$600 – as a site for the new church, located at the corner of Washington and Fifth Avenue. On March 9, 1847 they adopted the covenant of the Methuen, Massachusetts Congregational Church. The first service was held in the Courthouse on March 23, 1847 which is the anniversary date for FCC. In November 1848 they hired Rev L. S. Hobart as minister at an annual salary of \$400. The new church building was dedicated on June 21, 1849. By 1851 there were 113 church members.



After the Civil War ended, in July 1865 the church passed a resolution to build a new church. The cornerstone of our present church, at State and William, was laid on June 23, 1872, and the church was completed and dedicated on May 10, 1876. Due to money concerns a mortgage for \$5000 was deemed necessary in April 1873. To further help with costs in May 1875 pew sales and rentals were agreed on; this is why our pews are still divided. The first church was sold to a German-American Society and became the original home of Zion Lutheran Church. The site of the first church is now occupied by a Bank of Ann Arbor office.

SAVE THE DATE!

Mark your calendars for FCC's 170th Anniversary Celebration on March 25, 6-8:30 p.m. in Pilgrim Hall. Please join us for an evening of music, food, and fun! We will enjoy a contemporary-style worship service and special music by the Our Own Thing Chorale while celebrating our anniversary.

Please watch your bulletins and Friday emails for more information!

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

MARK SCHIRMER, CHAIR

It's time to start thinking about our annual Stewardship Campaign!

Wait! *What?* Didn't we just have a stewardship campaign?

Yes, we did. But if you recall our campaign last November was for a six-month "gap year" to help move the church to a new cadence for budgeting and planning. From this point forward, our First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor will kick off its fiscal year on July 1 and the budget year will run for 12 months, through June 30.

So what does that mean? Well, first and foremost, it means **May is now Pledge Month** -- when we will prepare the ground and plant the seeds for a fruitful year. We will ask for the generous donation of your time, talent and treasures to help support FCC's exceptional programming and wonderful staff. As I think you'll agree, it is cause worth celebrating.

We will share more information about FCC's Annual Stewardship Campaign in future emails and correspondence. **Remember, May is Pledge Month.**

If you have any questions about Stewardship or any suggestions on how to improve the campaign, feel free to reach out. I can be contacted by phone at 734-883-6346 or by email at 1960bird@gmail.com.

Thank you! And thanks for helping make FCC great.

Our Core Values:

Caring: We are a loving and mutually supportive faith community.

Proclaiming the Good News: We believe in a living and loving God.

Respect: We embrace openness, diversity, and individual faith journeys.

Compassion: We serve and support the needs of others.

Fellowship: We celebrate and enjoy life with each other.

GREAT LAKES SCRIP

It's never too late to be part of our scrip program to raise money for important mission/work trips of the church. You can use Scrip cards every time you shop. The beauty of Scrip is that you put your regular household shopping dollars to work. You earn money for our church without spending an additional penny. And Scrip can be used for just about any household purchase including food, clothing, entertainment, gasoline, dining out, online purchases, and even as gifts! We only earn money if you use your Scrip cards, so we hope you'll make using these cards a regular habit. Try putting your Scrip cards next to your money or debit/credit cards that you use to pay. When they are in plain sight you will remember to use them. Please remind everyone in your family about this important fundraising opportunity and stop by the Scrip table in the Mayflower Lobby on Sunday mornings, or call the church office to order your cards!



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

SECOND SUNDAY SERIES



“Avoiding Financial Exploitation in an Internet World”

On March 12, there will be a contemporary issues presentation on “Avoiding Financial Exploitation in an Internet World.” This presentation will feature Louise A. Moore at 11 a.m. in the Mayflower Room. Ms. Moore is the Financial Literacy Program Coordinator at the Bank of Ann Arbor.

Using the internet is part of modern life. We use it to make our life convenient and can hardly avoid it. Can we also use it safely? Why are we easy targets for frauds and scams? Ms. Moore will share lessons learned to allow using the internet safely and to keep from being victims of frauds and scams. She

will cover methods to recognize secure websites and safe ways to use the internet.



TRUSTEES

MELISSA JOY, CHAIR

February brings a new formulation for Board of Trustees as past chair and secretary, Beth Randall and Jan Hack respectively, have rotated off of trustees. We are so appreciative to both of them for their hard work over the past five and six years!

I will be replacing Beth as chair for the remainder of my term, through summer 2018. Liz Larrivee will serve as vice chair and Rick Reid, who joins trustees this winter, will serve as secretary. We're also welcoming Gae Miller as a new trustee. The remainder of our board includes Brian Connelly, Joe Denay, Mark Foster, Dan Jacobs, and Pete Sandretto.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the business and financial affairs of the church. We are an active board tackling interesting and challenging topics throughout the year! Top priorities this year include effective communication of the recent changes to stewardship and budgeting and a review of the church's strategic plan to ensure that we are working together to help move forward as a congregation.

An enduring goal of our board is to increase communication and transparency between the board of trustees and the congregation. To that end, we will continue to hold periodic informational meetings on church finances. If you have questions or items to discuss with trustees, don't hesitate to contact me at mwood19@gmail.com or 734.657.0880.



TREASURERS REPORT (AS OF JANUARY 31, 2017)

MIKE DABBS

Total Actual Revenue: \$37,249

Actual PLEDGE RECEIPTS: \$32,951

Total Actual Expenses: \$67,980

YTD Budget Revenue: \$ 46,667

YTD Budget Pledge Receipts: \$38,333

YTD Budget Expenses: \$65,954

The pledge receipts are included in the total revenue figures that precede it.

It is not uncommon for expenses to exceed revenues each month during the year. However, during this 6-month Gap Year Budget, we will not have the luxury of having the December year-end giving provide us with the funds to make up for the monthly shortfall of revenues. Thus, pledges and weekly offerings during the January – June 2017 period are absolutely essential to prevent us from having to draw additional trust funds than what has been budgeted for this period.

If you did not attend one of our information meetings in January, or the Annual Meeting of Members, at which the members approved the 2017 Gap Year (January – June 2017) Budget, I am pleased to report that the church stayed within the budgeted cap of trust fund distributions. If you are interested in knowing more about the 2016 finances, please feel free to contact me.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

The Circle of Friends met for a luncheon at the Cottage Inn on February 26th to socialize and plan for the month of April. We will meet again in April on Palm Sunday at 9 a.m. in the Mayflower Room to plan on our gifts for Easter to give to our friends. It will also be a time to review how the past year has gone and offer suggestions for next year. The flower delivery has been going smoothly under the direction of Liz Goodrich. We would welcome any new members to join us. If you are interested in our program, please call me at 313-303-1989 or email me at marquardtmaryann73@gmail.com. Thank you to all of our members who continue to visit and support their friends. -Mary Ann Marquardt



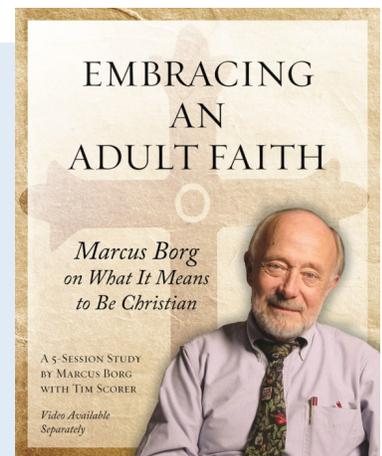
SMALL GROUPS—KNIGHT'S LUNCH CLUB



Please join us on the FOURTH Monday of the month for monthly lunch get-togethers with Bob Livingston and other FCC friends. Our lunch gatherings are highly informal and lots of fun, with welcoming and wide-ranging conversations. We will meet at Knight's Restaurant, 2324 Dexter Avenue, at 11:30 a.m., on Monday, March 27. Everyone is welcome! We hope you can join us!

SMALL GROUPS—TUESDAY NIGHT SERIES (TNS)

Want to try a small group but don't want to commit to something for months on end? Then our Tuesday Night Series is for you. We meet on Tuesday evenings from 7-8:30 p.m. in the Mayflower Room. At TNS, we view and discuss a variety of relevant and interesting theological issues. The series often last 4 to 8 weeks, with scheduled breaks between series. We began our DVD series titled, "Embracing an Adult Faith" by Marcus Borg. Questions? Please contact Bob at bob@fccannarbor.org. Everyone is welcome!

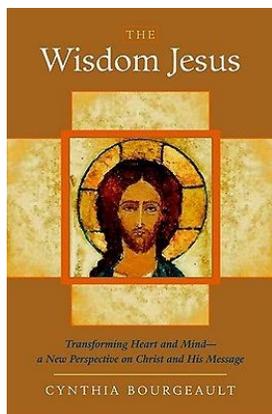


SMALL GROUPS—TEXT BREAKFAST



We gather informally with senior minister Bob Livingston every Wednesday morning at 8:30 a.m. at the Classic Cup Café (4389 Jackson Road) for lively discussion. We discuss the scripture for the upcoming Sunday sermon, sharing our understandings, insights, and our questions. We wrap up our morning about 10 a.m. Upcoming texts are placed in the previous Sunday's bulletin. We look forward to seeing you! Please join us!

SMALL GROUPS—MIND AND SPIRIT BOOK GROUP



The Mind and Spirit Book Group meets on the first and third Wednesday of the month from 10:15 – 11:30 a.m. in the Mayflower Room. This group is open to all. We recently began *The Wisdom Jesus* by Cynthia Bourgeault.

If you put aside what you *think* you know about Jesus and approach the Gospels as though for the first time, something remarkable happens: Jesus emerges as a teacher of the transformation of consciousness. Cynthia Bourgeault is a masterful guide to Jesus's vision and to the traditional contemplative practices you can use to experience the heart of His teachings for yourself.

Please bring your copy of the book to the meeting. All are welcome!

SMALL GROUPS—20/40

Throughout the month we will continue our work on a curriculum called White Privilege which addresses racial dialogue from a faith perspective. In it we have confronted our normalization of whiteness and challenged ourselves to consider how even our faith experiences have racial tones for which we may not have been aware. It's been a truly engaging and challenging experience! We meet regularly on Wednesdays from 6:30-8 p.m. in the lower level meeting room. Childcare is provided.



Traci Blackmon | John Dorhauer | Da Vita McCallister | John Paddock | Stephen G. Ray

WHITE PRIVILEGE let's talk

A Resource for Transformational Dialogue

Our Contemporary Issues Second Sunday speaker from the recent imprisonment presentation will be joining us on March 22 to talk about racial disparities of incarceration.

Of course, to balance our content, we will continue to play trivia at Wolverine Brewing the last Wednesday of every month, from 7-9 p.m. Childcare is not provided for trivia nights, and RSVPs are encouraged to save room for everyone.

SMALL GROUPS—SINGLE MOM'S MINISTRY

Parenthood is hard. Being a single parent is harder. Let us help. You are invited to join us on the third Thursday of the month for single mom's night out. This month's meeting is March 16.

Beginning at 6 p.m. you will be served a delicious dinner, have the chance to connect with other single moms in an informal setting, and be offered practical parenting programs. Meanwhile, your children will be fed dinner, entertained in a social setting with other kids their age, and given time and tutoring to complete their homework by screened volunteers. The program wraps up at 8:00 p.m. The event is free, but RSVPs are required. Please RSVP to Darcy.



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FCC Office Hours
Mon. – Fri.
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

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*Whatever Your
Story, You're
Welcome Here*

SUNDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- 8:30 a.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal, Choir Room
- 8:45 a.m. Continental Breakfast, Pilgrim Hall
- 9:00 a.m. Change of Pace Contemporary Service, Pilgrim Hall
- 9:30 a.m. Communion Service, Douglas Memorial Chapel
- 10:00 a.m. Traditional Service, Sanctuary
(Church School during 10:00 a.m. worship service)
- 11:00 a.m. Friendship Hour, Pilgrim Hall

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH MARCH 2017 CALENDAR

- March 3 12:15 p.m. Lenten Organ Recital Series
- March 5 11:15 a.m. AFC Meeting (Meeting Room)
- March 7 11:45 a.m. Men's Luncheon (Knights)
7:00 p.m. TNS (Mayflower Room)
- March 8 8:30 a.m. Text Breakfast (Classic Cup Café)
6:30 p.m. 20/40 (Meeting Room)
- March 10 12:15 p.m. Lenten Organ Recital Series
- March 12 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS
11:15 a.m. Second Sunday Presentation
- March 14 7:00 p.m. TNS (Mayflower Room)
- March 15 COURIER DEADLINE
8:30 a.m. Text Breakfast (Classic Cup Café)
6:30 p.m. 20/40 (Meeting Room)
- March 16 6:00 p.m. Single Mom's Night
- March 17 2017 FCC DIRECTORY PHOTOGRAPHY BEGINS
- March 17 12:15 p.m. Lenten Organ Recital Series
- March 20 6:15 p.m. Trustees Meeting (Mayflower)
- March 21 7:00 p.m. TNS (Mayflower Room)
- March 22 8:30 a.m. Text Breakfast (Classic Cup Café)
6:30 p.m. 20/40 (Meeting Room)
- March 23 FCC 170th Anniversary
- March 24 12:15 p.m. Lenten Organ Recital Series
- March 25 6:00 p.m. FCC Anniversary Event, Pilgrim Hall
- March 26 7:30 a.m. Ann Arbor Marathon Begins
6:00 p.m. Middle School Girls Night
- March 27 11:30 a.m. Knights Luncheon Group (Knights)
- March 28 1:00 p.m. Contemporary Issues Committee (Mayflower)
7:00 p.m. TNS (Mayflower Room)
- March 29 8:30 a.m. Text Breakfast (Classic Cup Café)
7:00 p.m. 20/40 (Wolverine Tap)
- March 31 12:15 p.m. Lenten Organ Recital Series