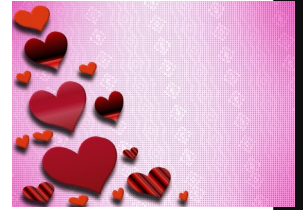


*The Network... a Publication of  
University Presbyterian Church  
February, 2024*



**Greetings from the pastor's study**

Dear WPC Members and Friends,

Well, this is week two of my interim pastorate and I am delighted to say I am having "fun." You are a wonderful community with a marvelous combination of pragmatism, commitment, and warmth. With lots of one on one hello's, impromptu meetings and encounters, a memorial service and two staff meetings under my belt I am starting to feel a part of your robust life together.

What you have here at UPC is not so common across American society. You share a sense of community rooted in personal relationships in which you are known and accepted for who you are; a social fabric that works only when reciprocated—and a culture in which trust which is essential for everything a church is called to do, thrives. Such depth of relationship/s is not to be taken for granted in our social media saturated, empathy-starved, society. As those conditions show no signs of abating sustaining a community like this one that is open to all, diverse, and outward looking is ever more important.

In fact, as we hear often and as the US Surgeon General has said loneliness is at epidemic levels among all age groups. Just being 'who you are'—a group of people who care about one another and about the wider community and world and who are open to anyone participating—is ministry in itself. What a positive position from which to call a permanent pastor and build a vision for the next chapter of your life at the start of your second century. We have important work to do to achieve that goal. I look forward to hearing about your past, learning more about the present and helping to discern what the future might hold.

Here's to an exciting year of building on strengths and looking ahead to where God is calling this great church to continue its brave witness to the Gospel.

All good wishes,

Tom

PS My door is always open, don't hesitate to stop in and say hello, email or call with an idea, feedback, or hopes and dreams you have for UPC.

Greetings UPC Members and Friends,

What a delight it has been getting to know you in this first month serving as your interim pastor. It's been fun learning how you get things done at UPC and seeing the wide range of church members making it happen.

I want to call your attention to two things: the Annual Meeting coming up following worship on February 4. This is an important day—we will ordain and install your newly elected elders and deacons during worship as well as celebrate the Lord's Supper. Then in fellowship hall we will conduct the annual business of UPC. This will include updates and reports on the interim process that will lead to a new permanent pastor, finances, building and grounds concerns, mission and outreach. In the Presbyterian Church we have the same right and responsibility (as well as privilege) that we do as citizens. We get to express our opinions and vote. Please circle your calendar and be sure to be here on February 4 to help UPC close out 2023 and welcome 2024.

Lent is just around the corner. Ash Wednesday is February 14 (also Valentine's Day ;-)) We will begin this forty day high and holy season that culminates in Holy Week and Easter with a service of imposing ashes remembering that we are human and flawed but gifted and called to be God's people. The word "lent" comes from the word to lengthen and occurs fittingly in the time of year when the days are lengthening and winter turns to spring. Just as the natural world transitions from dormancy to budding and blossoming, Lent is a time for us to turn intentionally inward in a spiritual practice of prayer, meditation, reading, journaling and then look outward with equal intention to 'pay forward'/give back in acts of kindness, following Jesus' example. On Sundays (2/18, 2/25, 3/3, 3/10) in Lent after worship I will lead a class I am titling "Discerning the Presence of God in Daily Life." I hope you can join me!

My office door is always open, my mobile phone always with me—don't hesitate to reach out if you have an specific concerns to contribute to the cause of calling a new pastor or just to say hello or meet for coffee!

Warmest Wishes,

Tom

## Worship Column

### **Sunday, February 4**

*5th Sunday after Epiphany*

Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c;  
1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

### **Sunday, February 11**

*Transfiguration of the Lord*

2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6;  
2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

### **Wednesday, February 14**

*Ash Wednesday*

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; or Isaiah 58:1-12;  
Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10;  
Matthew 6:1-06, 16-21

### **Sunday, February 18**

*1st Sunday in Lent*

Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10;  
1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

### **Sunday, February 25**

*2nd Sunday in Lent*

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31;  
Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9



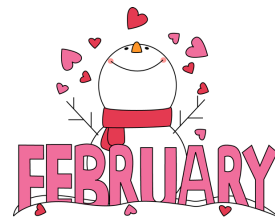
**HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY!**

### **FEBRUARY**

- 1 Connie Michael
- 1 Derek Fisher
- 2 Andrew Safulko
- 6 Linda Moorhouse
- 8 Jim Smyton
- 12 Grace Agbemenu
- 17 Barbara Lyons
- 24 John Schimminger

## What's Happening in February

Thursday, February 1	12:00 pm 7:30 pm	Food Pantry Open Choir
Saturday, February 3	10:00 am	Breakfast with Friends
Sunday, February 4	9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am	Choir Worship Service Annual Meeting
Monday, February 5	7:00 pm	Zoom Deacons' Meeting
Tuesday, February 6	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open
Wednesday, February 7	2:30 pm	Ukulele
Thursday, February 8	12:00 pm 7:30 pm	Food Pantry Open Choir
Sunday, February 11	9:30 am 10:30 am	Choir Worship Service
Tuesday, February 13	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open
Wednesday, February 14	2:30 pm 7:00 pm	Ukulele Ash Wednesday Service
Thursday, February 15	12:00 pm 7:30 pm	Food Pantry Service Choir
Sunday, February 18	9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am 11:30 am	Choir Worship Service UPC Students & Friends Bible Study Lenten Study
Monday, February 19	<i>President's Day</i>	<i>Church Office Closed</i>
Tuesday, February 20	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open
Wednesday, February 21	7:00 pm	Session
Thursday, February 22	12:00 pm 7:30 pm	Food Pantry Open Choir
Sunday, February 25	9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am 11:30 am	Choir Worship Service Birthday Cake Lenten Study
Tuesday, February 27	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open
Thursday, February 29	12:00 pm 7:30 pm	Food Pantry Open Choir



Frontera de Cristo 2024 (1)

January 14, 2024, Sunday

Avocado toast and Café Justo/Just Coffee for breakfast this morning. Yum! Avocados are plentiful and inexpensive here in Douglas and we will take advantage of them.

My hands and legs are less swollen now that we have been in Arizona since Wednesday, here in Douglas (elevation 4032) since Thursday. As my body ages it takes longer to adjust to the stress of flying, to the thinner mountain air and to the time zone change (2 hours). I have slept better the past two nights.

Tracy picked us up at the Tucson airport and drove us to their house (currently renting while they search for one to buy) on the northeast border of the city. We are their first "Buffalo guests." We had a good visit and went out to eat breakfast next morning. We had said we would pay but they insisted, so, wanting to be agreeable... We will plan to visit them again before we leave and then the food will be on us.

Tracy is busy at St. Marks. Tim is finishing up reports for the grant projects he had been working on at Canisius and is seeking some kind of work activity in Tucson, perhaps through the U of Arizona. They are well and Tracy is glad to be nearer to her parents as they age. We caught them up on UPC activities and Tracy was pleased that all seems to be going as well as it is. Warm greetings from them to all.

Mark Adams, Frontera US coordinator, picked us up from a presbytery gathering (free lunch) in Tucson and drove us here to Douglas. We are staying once again at the Frontera office/house in Douglas and are warm and with such creature comforts as a warm bathroom when taking showers, kitchen appliances to meet our needs for meal preparation and immediate access to the internet. It should be a much easier time than 2023.

The temperature runs from high 20s to 30 at night, high 50s to mid-60s in the daytime. Last week it snowed here. Bright sun all day long means we need to seek shade as it is to be found and drink plenty of liquids so as to avoid dehydration. We dress in layers to adjust to the temperature—on in the morning and off in the afternoon and back on in the evening. Around 70 today.

We worshiped with the First Presbyterian Church of Douglas this morning at their temporary location at Sacred Heart Chapel, 306 17<sup>th</sup> Street. "Give it to them (First Pres)," the Bishop said. First Pres offered to pay rent but are getting the use of the chapel for free from the Diocese. The ecumenism of the border region is something we cherish.

Following the service we made our third trip to Walmart (the only game in town) to do the last round of grocery shopping and get us set for the week ahead. We also picked up a few more items for the kitchen. Our tradition is to replenish kitchen and household items that have somehow migrated to other venues over the passage of time. Later, we will do a round of laundry and perhaps read or watch a Walter's Choice episode on Passport. Currently watching La Sala (The Room), a mystery program set in Spain.

We go to the Café Justo y Mas coffee house in Agua Prieta on Monday (tomorrow) where we hope to start ESL classes and also take a 4 to 8 pm turn serving migrants at the Migrant Resource Center. Tuesdays will be in the office working on plans for the 40<sup>th</sup> Frontera anniversary and also attending the vigil of remembrance in person at 5:15 pm

Douglas time (7:15 on Zoom in Buffalo). Wednesdays start with an 8:30 am Frontera devotional at the coffee shop and a second turn at the MRC (noon to 4). More ESL classes on Thursdays. On Friday, we will assist at the new migrant hostel here in Douglas for those who are awaiting openings at the hostel in Tucson.

Saturdays are days off.

Yesterday, Saturday January 13, on my day off, I helped Mark Adams tear down a rotting platform and ramp at the side of the office/house. "This is male bonding activity," I said to Lee Ann. I added, "I actually prefer the male bonding activities where you just sit and read a book and maybe have some cookies and coffee."

We pray that you are all safe and well, especially in light of the storm this weekend.

Howard and Lee Ann

Howard

### **Joy Jar - Frontera de Cristo Donations 2024**

Douglas Welcome Center, Douglas, Arizona is currently hosting migrants who have been properly admitted into the U.S. and are in process of seeking asylum. Frontera de Cristo personnel attend to the migrant needs every Friday. *Lee Ann and Howard*, who are at Frontera right now through mid-February, are assisting in this Friday effort.

#### ***How Can We Help?***

The new and primary need for Frontera in this effort is financial support for transportation (gas and vehicle upkeep).

Migrants (5000 since September) are transported from Douglas to Casa Alitas (Tucson) when there is room in that hostel, or to the airport (Tucson) if they are to stay with family/sponsors while completing the asylum process. This is a round trip of 230 miles to either location. A FEMA grant to Pima County, Arizona pays for the migrants' food and basic needs and currently for some bus transportation to Tucson. The funding for this transportation is running out. Additional transportation (two 15-passenger vans) is being provided by Frontera de Cristo.

Our Joy Jar will be available in the Narthex on January 20th, 27th and February 3<sup>rd</sup> to accept donations to help with transportation needs for these asylum seekers. We welcome cash or checks written to UPC with **Frontera** in the memo line.



## Ministry to Community Committee

### Gun Violence Awareness

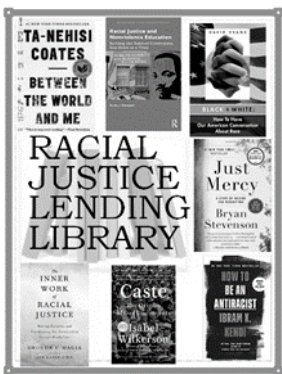
Last May Session gave its support to the Ministry to Community Committee's request for a one year focus on Gun Violence Awareness. Part of that focus is sharing information with our church family. This information is from the group *Everytown for Gun Safety*. Please check out their website. [everytown.org](http://everytown.org)



*Mayors Against Illegal Guns* and *Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America* came together in 2013 to work to end gun violence. They have since evolved into the largest gun violence prevention organization in America; *Everytown for Gun Safety*. To reach their goal of ending gun violence, *Everytown* registers voters, elects gun safety advocates, demands action from our elected officials, and educates the public.

Each year *Everytown* ranks the states on 50 key gun safety policies. What is the relationship between Gun Law Strength and Gun Violence Rate? New York ranks #2 for its strong gun laws with 5.3 gun deaths per 100,000 residents. Sadly by comparison, Arkansas ranks #50 for its weak gun laws with 22.1 gun deaths per 100,000 residents.

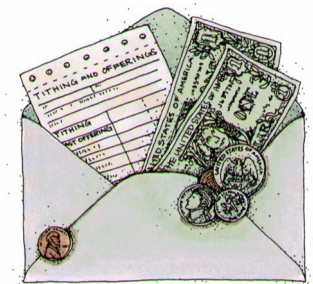
*Everytown* with *Moms Demand Action* promote gun safety with its Be SMART program focused on securing and storing guns safely in homes and vehicles. With 4.6 million children living in homes with loaded, unlocked guns, this is certainly a health issue for our families. Last year the Michigan chapters of *Moms Demand Action* and *Students Demand Action* celebrated a victory. Michigan's governor signed legislation to require the secure storage of firearms in homes where children are present. *Everytown* will continue to work to pass secure storage laws in the remaining 24 states without such safety laws.



### Racial Justice Library

Have you read any good books lately? When you borrow books from our Racial Justice Library, your answer will be YES! There are 3 shelves filled with nonfiction, fiction, and children's books. Please check it out in the Fellowship Hall.

**Remember to take your church envelopes home. They are on the card table in the of the sanctuary.**



**back**

## Session Highlights:

These are the highlights of the January Session Meeting:

~There will be a training offered on how to use the AED/CPR.

~The Joy Jar will be ready to collect our gifts to help support Frontero de Cristo.

~Session reviewed the essential goals/tasks that UPC will work on during the interim period while the PNC begins the search for our permanent pastor.



### **Beach Sweep**

Yes, winter will pass away.

Spring will come.  
Next is Easter.  
then Earth Day!

Let's care for creation this year by helping with the Beach Sweep! Organized by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, the Beach Sweep is an action to clean up trash left by our waterways, to reduce pollution and to identify sources of that trash.

The Community Committee urges UPC folk to take action! Let's choose a favorite waterway, sign up with Waterkeeper in March, and then show up on Earth Day to clean up!

So what is your favorite waterway? Tell the Community Committee now, to get ready for the Beach Sweep!

We are: Elaine Swaine, Janet Mazzaroppi, Howard Henry, Shirley Herman, Gladys Gifford, Marietta Bratton.

For more info, see Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper at [bnwaterkeeper.org](http://bnwaterkeeper.org)





Do you love to sing? The UPC Choir would like to fill a few vacant spaces in our choir loft! If you have ever thought about or wondered about what it would be like to take part in this important ministry, I urge you to visit with me and discuss opportunities for serving in this way. There is plenty of research concerning the physical and mental benefits of singing. Choral singing is even better! You receive the benefits of singing, but are able to do so in a friendly environment with your friends. There is no audition, and you will never be asked to sing by yourself unless you would like to do so. One of the best visual elements, especially for a visitor, first time or continuing, is to look at the choir loft and see it filled with dedicated people who are leading in worship. Won't you consider being a part of this wonderful group? Please contact Allan Andrews

at [allanandrews1954@gmail.com](mailto:allanandrews1954@gmail.com)



### **UPC Student & Friends Bible Study**

John McClester will be leading the UPC Student & Friends Bible Study on the following dates:

February 18, March 10, April 21 at 11:30 am in the Mary and Martha Room. Please join us.

Frontera de Cristo 2024 (2)

January 21, 2024, Sunday

Our schedule has been lighter this year and the weather, at least for the past week, warmer. Both of these are good.

We have now put in two shifts at the Migrant Resource Center (MRC) but have not seen individual migrants coming to the center as in years past. One, there seem to be fewer of them being sent back into Mexico by the Border Patrol; and, two, of those that are, the cartels who are trafficking them have told them not to come to the MRC.

When I look at the migration issue from a business model, it seems to me that cartel "coyotes" engaged in human trafficking and border wall and security infrastructure manufacturers have little incentive to see a resolution to the immigration question. Both businesses depend on an uninterrupted flow of migrants attempting to cross into the United States in dangerous, out-of-the-way locations. It's a money-maker.

If economic opportunity and security infrastructure could be enhanced in our neighbor nations to the south, perhaps we would see less people leaving home in a desperate search for survival.

The MRC, in addition to serving the immediate physical and humanitarian and even spiritual needs of migrants, encourages them to consider the dangers of repeated attempts at

crossing and consider choosing to return home. For the migrants, however, they and their families have already desperately invested \$8-10,000 (paid to the cartel "coyotes") in this effort to escape violence and poverty, and have already endured such physical and emotional harms along the way, that to turn aside at this point from the goal of reaching the US may make no sense at all. Customs and Border Patrol has created an application process (CBP1) to request asylum but I believe there are still many bugs in it and it is SLOW.

The people we are now seeing at the MRC are small family groups who are once again, as in 2019, waiting in a line at the Douglas Port of Entry to be periodically allowed to enter the U.S. and request asylum. They come to use the MRC bathroom and take a shower and perhaps have some coffee or something to eat. The cartels seem not to be preying upon the families to the extent that was the case in 2019. Some of the families spend the night in the open at the wall to wait for the call that may come the next day; some sleep overnight at the hostel (CAME – Centro Atención de Migrantes Exodus) in Agua Prieta (AP); some may have some means to find other accommodation.

We did not have any migrants to attend to here in Douglas on this Friday but we have happily added taking Mark and Miriam's son, Nathan, to and from the Douglas High School each morning. Mark, from South Carolina, and Miriam, from Chiapas (and now a naturalized American citizen), met and married here in Agua Prieta and live in that city. Nathan, their youngest, went to grade school in AP and now is a Sophomore at the Douglas HS. He and many other children who were born in the US or born to at least one US citizen parent, but live in AP, cross the border each morning to attend school. Crossing into the US by automobile lately can take up to 1 to 2 hours. With us staying in the office, Mark and Miriam can drop Nathan off at the Port of Entry where he can walk across the border and we can provide the transportation from the Bordermart to the school up on 15<sup>th</sup> Street. He walks back to the office at the end of the school day and we return him to Bordermart.

ESL classes have gotten off to a good start. We have also been asked to help an English speaking YAV (PCUSA Young Adult Volunteer) learn Spanish. He is based in Tucson and so we will do this via ZOOM. The planning for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration to take place in October is underway.

We went to church in Douglas this morning, had bean burritos and pasta salad for lunch at the coffee hour, went grocery shopping, filled up the gas tank and the tires in the car we are using, later had a meal with Mennonite friends at their house. Not too different from a Sunday in Buffalo.

Paz (peace) y (and) bendiciones (blessings).

Howard and Lee Ann