



From the pastor's pen...

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. Romans 5:1-4

Happy New Year, everyone! Although if I'm being honest, for me it hasn't been all that happy so far! Most of you are aware that my hip replacement surgery was postponed because I, and most of my family, got COVID after Christmas, then I got a stomach bug, and just as I was beginning to feel better, I threw out my back.

Now in the scope of all the suffering in the world I realize this is small potatoes, but that doesn't mean I haven't spent the good part of a month feeling miserable. We Christians have a weird relationship to suffering, I think. Often, we tend to diminish it, pretend it's not as bad as it actually is: in an effort to please God? It's as if we are real about our suffering, God will think we are not the grateful people we are supposed to be. I wonder who we think we're kidding?

Another common approach to suffering can be to fall into the "poor me!" mentality. We behave as if we are victims just waiting for the next bad thing to happen to us. We moan and complain about every little thing that goes wrong, sometimes amplifying its severity so we get people's pity and help. I don't think this attitude is what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he says, "we glory in our sufferings!"

Paul begins this writing about suffering reminding us of our relationship to God through Jesus Christ. An Old Testament prophecy about Jesus called him "a man of suffering, and familiar with pain." (Isaiah 53:3) The whole point of our lives here on earth is for us to become more and more like Jesus so that others around us can see who our God is, what he is like. I believe this means we are to expect suffering, not in a fearful way, rather in a way that leads to hope. It is through our suffering we become more and more like our Jesus, who put away the glory of heaven and took on all the frailty and pain of being human. If we let it, suffering has a way of revealing to us all those false masks we rely on to make us more acceptable to ourselves and others. It strips us down to our true selves, and it is exactly here that we find God loving us, accepting us, healing us.

As a people, I would say that you at Park Ridge are also going through a season of suffering. You are waiting for your next shepherd, a pastor who can lead you to increasingly reflect Jesus to the people here in Rochester. I want you to know that I see you as suffering well. You are not complaining, you continue ministering, you are hopeful. Well done! I think this can also be for you a season of prayer asking God to reveal what needs to change for you to better reflect Jesus in the coming years. Lay everything on the altar. Make this a priority as you meet in your small groups, in your conversations with each other. Suffering is a time we can become more truly who God intends us to be. Let's step toward that future together. *"We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."*

The men continue to meet for breakfast on the second and fourth Saturday each month, beginning at 9:00 am.

All men are welcome to attend.

Meetings are at Olympia Restaurant,
2380 Lyell Ave, Gates
(In the plaza across from Wegmans)



Wednesday Night Lunch Bunch

Open Door Mission Helpers-

Thank you so much for the support of the materials by Dave and Carolyn!

Thank you very much for the many hands that have helped in this task to feed a small portion of the many in need in our community. I really appreciate the range of conversations that can occur while making PB&J sandwiches. There is interest in adding one Sunday a month to the lunch making schedule. Let me now if you can help or if you can donate supplies for one month.

Tom Rende,
Coordinator



Ladies Ministry

Once again the Ladies of Park Ridge joined together to enjoy each other's company and share in our 2nd Annual Christmas Cookie Exchange!! Thanks to all you ladies who came and we hope to have even more of you attend next year! We indulged in each other's good baking and cuddling foster kittens! Stay tuned for our next event in February!



*Joyce Jarvis and Pam Rende
Ladies Ministry Coordinators*



Prayer nights will be resuming on the regular schedule of 6:30-7:30 pm on the last Sunday each month. Remember to pray for our neighbors as you drive down Straub Road.

Indoor Sale to Support Missions

March 15 8:00 am-5:00 pm

March 16 8:00 am-2:00 pm

Donations for the sale can be brought to the Deats Room, on the lower level, anytime.
PLEASE NO CLOTHING, ELECTRONICS OR LARGE FURNITURE!
Now is a good time to clean out the closets and basement!

Contact Michelle Kettinger if you have items you need picked up or to arrange a drop off time other than Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings.

Help will be needed the week of the sale for set up, helping at the sale and cleaning up Saturday afternoon. Let Michelle know if you are able to help.

**WE NEED YOUR
TREASURES!**



What's Going on Around the Church

Sunday Morning and Wednesday Evening Study Groups

It is amazing, when you get a small group of fellow believers together for one purpose, how rich the conversation can be. There is so much knowledge, experience, and faith in our church. For those who have been a part of it, thank you. For those who have not made the commitment, please do. There are four amazing groups meeting each week.

Monthly Bible Study at the Villages

Many may not know but I (Tom Rende) meet with a group of seniors once a month. This group of women come each month and thrive on having a conversation with others and what better conversation than God. Many of them aren't able to make it to church on Sunday but still desire to worship. A great blessing for me to experience each month.

Powerhouse Youth Retreat

The teens annual retreat to Houghton University will be held February 16-18. Please be in prayer for this event. If you would like to sponsor a teen, make your donation to Park Ridge FMC, and write Powerhouse Sponsor in the memo line.

A note from the office:

Year end giving statements have been mailed. Please contact the church office if you have not received yours.

You may notice that your statement has an envelope number listed on it, and are thinking "but I don't have numbered envelopes!" The program that is used assigns an envelope number to each giver when that person is added to the system.

Singing/Choir Opportunity!!

Many of you may remember that years ago that the Parkridge choir joined in with a community choir called "Grace Choir" which was led by Lon Berry. Lon is again extending an invitation for anyone who is interested! You can either attend rehearsals on Mondays from 7-9 at the Legacy at Clover Blossom (100 McAuley Drive) OR Tuesdays from 7 - 9 at the East Bloomfield United Methodist Church (2 Park Place). If you love to raise your voice in a choir setting, this is a great chance to do that, with great music and wonderful leadership!!



Missions Pages

The Free Methodist World Missions website provides many resources including news about our missionaries as well as prayer calendars so that you can pray for specific needs around the world. Check out the January Heartbeat at <https://fmwm.org/> for stories of hope and the monthly World Missions Prayer Calendar.

Here are some highlights about the work being done by ministries with a personal Park Ridge connection:

Dorrs Update – Tim, Kellie, Lydia, and Esther are finally permanently in Mexico! Here’s a section from their December 2023 newsletter: “Many people have asked us how our first few months in Mexico have been. I think we would have to describe them with one word: BUSY! We have had so much to learn. While many aspects of life are similar to life in the US, there is enough difference in the way things are done here. Every day is a new adventure for us, whether it be driving into the nearby city of Oaxaca (I am pretty sure we take a new road every time we are in the city) to discovering that everything takes longer to accomplish. Even cooking eggs takes longer due to living 5,500 feet above sea level. Not only are normal life activities more work here in Mexico, it is also ALL IN SPANISH! Our family is doing well though. We have learned to adapt and overcome the many challenges that life in Mexico presents every day. We have been able to get our 1-year temporary resident visas. I (Tim) have my driver’s license; we have a Mexican bank account; and most recently – we bought a car! All of these things have been challenging, but certainly not impossible. Our language abilities are certainly not where we need them to be yet, but we are advancing every day. We could not have accomplished any of this without the grace of God resting on us. We have seen his hand on our lives over and over again. It is quite amazing to be able to rely on such an amazing and loving God. He is the God of the details! We are certainly thankful for that. Learning to live in another country requires so much figuring stuff out, we often miss the details as we just try to hang on to the bigger picture.”

For more information about the Dorrs and their ministry, we encourage you to sign up for their newsletter. To receive regular updates from the Dorrs, email them at Tkdorr0019@gmail.com. The newsletter provides details on how you can support them personally and the ministry they are doing through Wycliffe Bible Translators. To support the Dorrs financially, please visit www.wycliffe.org/partner/TKDorr.

Dublin – Please remember Declan Keenan/Just Ask and Billy Swann/Dublin Family Outreach in your prayers. The city of Dublin recently experienced significant unrest in the aftermath of a stabbing attack in late November. Far right groups have used that event to enflame anti-immigration sentiments, and a sense of unrest can still be felt in and around the City Centre. Be in prayer for these ministries, and especially for the work of Just Ask as they work with children directly affected by these events. Kirk and Michelle Kettinger will be taking a team of Roberts students back to Dublin to work with Deco and Billy in May 2024. Please pray for that team as they prepare and fundraise for that important work. This will be the first Roberts team to go back to Dublin since the pandemic. Please support the Indoor Sale for Missions on March 15-16 by bringing items to the church for the sale. If you would like to give to support the Dublin Family Outreach and summer camps, you can find the giving information in Billy’s newsletter. You can sign up for the newsletter by emailing Billy at citymissiondublin@gmail.com.

Here are a few highlights from the Free Methodist World Missions Hotline:

- **Africa** – Free Methodist churches in Cameroon began 20 days of prayer and fasting on January 8. Join them in the following prayers: o Each individual will draw closer to God. o Members will discover new ways they can be part of the advancement of God’s kingdom. o The Holy Spirit will unify and bring encouragement to each church body. Praise the Lord for 87 new believers in Ethiopia who were baptized during the church’s Christmas celebration on January 7. Pray for the growth of these new believers.
- **Asia** – Thank you for praying for the annual meeting in Thailand. Superintendent Joshua reports that 279 people became believers through Christmas outreach, making 589 new believers in 2023! Pray these new believers will continue to grow in faith and develop a passion to tell others the good news. The annual meeting of the Cambodian FMC will be held in Phnom Penh on Saturday, January 13. Pray for an anointing of the Holy Spirit on all the pastors and leaders. Pray God will reveal Himself to pastors and leaders in the Philippines as they seek God’s direction for 2024 during their 40 days of prayer and fasting.
- **Europe** – Pray for the launching of a new ministry in Albania. Affiliate missionaries Algent and Erjona Bregu will open the Korca Adventure Center on January 20. This ministry outreach in southeastern Albania will organize various outdoor activities and events for all ages. They aim to establish “affinity groups” that lead to open conversations about the gospel. Learn more about two opportunities in Europe: Holiness Conference in Malta March 6-9, 2024 Vision Trip Europe April 22-May 3, 2025
- **Latin America** – Latin America Area Director Dr. Ricardo Gomez begins a month of travel this week, overseeing annual meetings in Paraguay, Peru, and Ecuador. Then, in the first weeks of February, he will have leadership of the Latin America Leaders Summit. Pray for traveling mercies, wisdom, energy and good health for Dr. Ricardo and Beth.
- **Middle East** – Pray for the multiplication of house churches in two growing Impact Middle East networks in Jordan. For the most recent Weekly Prayer Hotline and Monthly Prayer Guide, go to <https://fmwm.org/pray/>