



Pilgrim Post

DECEMBER Volume 23 issue 12

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We, the people of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, of Muskegon, care for the welfare of our community and welcome everyone, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey. We welcome into our community people of every age, race, nationality, mental and physical ability, economic and social status, faith background, marital standing, family structure, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation. We also invite you to share in the life, leadership, worship, fellowship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our congregation as we seek to grow together in faith and love.

Merry Christmas



LETTER FROM REV. TIM

Dear friends,

I love the picture on the cover of this month's Pilgrim Post, and I am looking forward with eager anticipation to our Candlelight Concert on the 10th and our Christmas Eve service on the 24th, as well as praying we will not be snowed out again this year. But for most of this month, we are in the season of Advent and I want to share a few thoughts about that, triggered by some words shared in an email and a Facebook meme, both courtesy of Dan Barnum-Steggerda. He signed off one of our e-mail exchanges a while back with the words, "Blessings for today and bright hope for tomorrow." That made me think of the words I always share on the first Sunday of Advent in blessing our Advent Wreath.

I speak of Advent as a time when we prepare for the coming of Christ into the world. I say, "We fix our eyes not just on the Christ who came to Bethlehem so long ago, nor even the Christ who will come again in glory, but also on Emmanuel, God with us gives us hope and fill us with peace and joy and love."

Which brings me to that Facebook meme, taken also from my colleague Dan's page, but credited by him to Fr. Ken Saunders of St. James Episcopal Church in Greenville, Tennessee. He wrote,

Inaccurate eschatology cause the church to:

Wait for a King who already reigns,
Wait for a Kingdom they're already in,
Wait to become what they already are,
Wait for an age that has already come,
Wait for victory that's already been won..

And the upshot of all that is that far too often we wait to do what we should already be doing. That, to me is the challenge of the Advent Season: to ask ourselves what it is that we should be about now, not waiting to get around to sometime down the road. What expressions of that hope and peace and joy and love that are ours by God's grace can we share with those around us? A kind word, thoughts and prayers, certainly, but also things that will bring to them blessings for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Tim

Our Church Family

Prayers are appreciated for continued healing for members and friends of our church:

*Those who suffer in silence. Those who are homebound. Those who are ill.
Those who are recovering from surgery. Those who are lonely.
Those who have moved. Those who have lost a loved one.*

Sympathy and Prayers:

For Pat Johnson and family on Tom Johnson's passing. Tom passed away on November 8, 2023 at the age of 85. Tom and Pat were married in 1962. Following his graduation from law school at the University of Pennsylvania Law School they moved to Muskegon. Tom practiced law until retiring in 2002. Tom loved spending time with family, loved history and was a member of the Muskegon History Club. He served on many community boards. Tom was a long time member of First Congregational Church where he served on the Governing Board and sang for many years in the choir. He leaves behind his wife Patty, sons Geoff (Barbara Garner), David (Tracy), daughter Beth (Matt) Cooper, 6 grandchildren; brother Bill, and 4 nieces and a nephew. A celebration of life will be held December 9 at FCC at 2 p.m. with visitation at 1.

We have received word from Tom and Betty Mason's daughter that a previous minister of FCC Rev Tom Mason, has passed away on October 28, 2023 in Grand Rapids, MI. Our sympathy and prayers are with Betty Mason and family.

December Birthdays

01 James Kuzma	22 Tom Chadwick; Steve Barnard; Bob Vangeest
02 Ted Mauseth	23 Ken Blakey; Aislyn Twining
04 Pat Parsons	24 Merijo Dulyea
06 Nancy Doctor; Kristen Orion	25 Kyle Van Donkelaar; Amy Crago
08 Gordon Mudler	26 Roy Winegar
09 Judy Clark-Ochs	30 Sue Schuiteman; Judy Vanderhoeven; Bruce Hood; Joy Malmquist
11 Jim Clark	31 Jan Basham
13 Gillian Major; Judy Miller	
14 Jackson Wiles	
19 Peggy Whitlock; Jill White; Karen Jackson Ellie Keessen	



What's Happening

Candlelight Concert

At FCC Sunday, December 10, 2023
7:00 pm. Free will offering no rsvp needed.
It is a beautiful way to begin your holiday.



Thursday Emails

Join in on up to date FCC events and information. Also a direct link to our on-line worship service. Just email michaelm@fccmuskegon.org and ask to be put on our Thursday email.

Women's Single Group

We will meet for lunch at 1:00 pm

Tuesday, December 5, 2023 at Judy Dewall's home. Please bring a \$10-\$15 White Elephant or a gift for gift exchange. Sign up at the Welcome Center for food assignments or call Judy D. at 734-478-3716.

Cookies for Sunday Fellowship

Those whose last names begin with the letters E- through J please bring cookies or treats during the month of December. Gluten free and/or sugar free cookies are also appreciated.

Thank you

To Robin & Jackie Murphy for their beautiful Nativity arrangements. You can see them in both the parlor and the display case in the lobby. They also decorated the tree in the parlor.

Thank you to all who helped decorate our church for the Christmas season.

Thank you for making this year's Thanksgiving Feast such a great thime. A special thank you to all who helped plan, set up, decorations, serve, clean up bring desserts, and attended this event. Thank you to Dave Kountry Katering for the delicious food.

GSA Youth Meetings

Every Monday at 7:00 pm. in Youth Room downstairs at FCC.
Please contact Jessica Krause for more information.

Tuesday is Food Pantry here at FCC We receive names with appointments from Love In The Name of Christ. If you know of anyone in need of food please have them call Love at 231-773-3448 before Tuesday. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Shirley Lawton or call the church office.

The last Saturday of each month we hold a Saturday Breakfast which is open to the community. The Breakfast is from 9-10:30 am and is free to all. Please contact Donna Lachniet if you are willing to volunteer.



Winter Weather

If Muskegon Public Schools close for a weather event
the Church **office** will be closed.

For Sunday's if we need to cancel you may check with the news channels of
WOOD Channel 8 and WZZM 13.

Choir members, please Check your emails.

Dr. Match will alert you if choir rehearsal or service is to be cancelled or not.

Please Join Us!

Sunday, December 24 Fourth Sunday of Advent
10:30 am Worship Service/ Christmas Pageant
11:00 pm Traditional Christmas Eve Service
FCC Festival Brass



GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

Meeting of November 20, 2023

Meeting was called to order Monday, November 20, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. by President, Eddie Jankowski.

Rev. Tim Vander Haar offered a prayer.

1. **President's Report:** Eddie expressed thanks for all who made the Thanksgiving feast another successful event.
2. **Minister's Report:** Another successful Thanksgiving Feast has led to securing the caterers for next year. Full accounting has not been completed to confirm how many guests are going to be subsidized for their meals.
Planning is underway for a celebration of the life of Tom Johnson on December 9. Tom Johnson filled many important roles at FCC over many years of membership, including Governing Board and Motet Choir. This celebration will happen on a day filled with much activity related to the annual Candlelight Service.
3. **Treasurer's report:** Year to Date expenses are \$8,143 over budget with expectation that year-end giving will affect the bottom line positively.
4. **New Business:** Approved the Senior Minister to distribute Christmas gifts to staff - full and part time on their behalf as budgeted.

MOTION PASSED: Approved Missions and Service to move forward in cooperation with Nelson Neighborhood Improvement Association, as they develop plans for Saturday Breakfast Garden.

Department minutes are available to church members.
Please contact the church office to request a copy.

Next Meeting: December 18, 2023

PRELIMINARY MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT for October 2023

	Current Month Actual	Current YTD Actual	2022-2023 YTD Budget	2022-2023 YTD Difference	2022-2023 Annual Budget
Pledged Offerings	\$22,838	\$ 99,655	\$ 119,268	\$ - 19,613	\$ 320,000
Non-pledged Offerings	1, 235	7,486	5,843	1,643	31,145
Misc. Income	10,852	12,302	1,750	10,552	52,867
Operating Income Endow.	0	20,607	25,525	-4,918	95,056
Total Op. Income	\$ 34,925	\$140,049	\$ 152,386	\$ - 12,336	\$ 499,067
Total Op. Expenses	\$ 40,854	\$148,193	\$ 162,416	\$ - 14,223	\$ 499,067
NET TOTAL:	\$ - 5,928	\$ - 8,143	\$ - 10,030	\$ 1,887	0

Expenses exceeded income for the month of October by \$5,928, bringing year-to-date net total to \$ - 8,143. Actual income and expenses both came in below budget expectations.

Income continues to come in lower than budgeted, due to our pledge goal of \$320,000 not being met.

(As of 11/07/2023, Deb Collett, Treasurer - ejm)



Merry Christmas

DECEMBER LECTONARY

- FRI Dec 01** Daniel 2:7-14, Daniel 3:75-81 (*Apocryphal Additions*); Luke 21:29-33
- SAT Dec 02** Daniel 7:15-27; Daniel 3:82-87 (*Apocryphal Additions*); Luke 21:34-36
- SUN Dec 03 FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT** Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7;
I Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37
- MON Dec 04** Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122:1-9; Matthew 8:5-11
- TUE Dec 05** Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Luke 10:21-24
- WED Dec 06** Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23; Matthew 15:29-37
- THU Dec 07** Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a; Matthew 7:21, 24-27
- FRI Dec 08** Isaiah 29:17-24; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14; Matthew 9:27-31
- SAT Dec 09** Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Psalm 147:1-6; Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5-8
- SUN Dec 10 SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT** Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15; Mark 1:1-8
- MON Dec 11** Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 85:8-13; Luke 5:17-26
- TUE Dec 12** Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 96:1-3, 10-13; Matthew 18:12-14
- WED Dec 13** Isaiah 40:25-31; Psalm 103:1-4, 8-10; Matthew 11:28-30
- THU Dec 14** Isaiah 41:13-20; Psalm 145:1, 8-13; Matthew 11:11-15
- FRI Dec 15** Isaiah 48:17-19; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Matthew 11:16-19
- SAT Dec 16** Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11 (*Apocrypha*); Psalm 80:1-3, 14-15, 17-18;
Matthew 17:10-13
- SUN Dec 17 THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT** Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126;
I Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28
- MON Dec 18** Jeremiah 23:5-8; Psalm 72:1, 12-13, 18-19; Matthew 1:18-24
- TUE Dec 19** Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Psalm 71:3-6, 16-17; Luke 1:5-25
- WED Dec 20** Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 24:1-6; Luke 1:26-38
- THU Dec 21** Song of Solomon 2:8-14 *or* Zephaniah 3:14-18; Psalm 33:1-3, 11-12, 20-21; Luke 1:39-45
- FRI Dec 22** I Samuel 1:24-28; I Samuel 2:1, 4-8; Luke 1:46-58
- SAT Dec 23** Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Psalm 25:4-5, 8-10, 14; Luke 21:28; Luke 1:57-56
- SUN Dec 24 FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT PAGEANT CHRISTMAS EVE**
II Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38
- MON Dec 25 CHRISTMAS DAY** Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-20
- TUE Dec 26 FEAST OF STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR** Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59;
Psalm 31:2-3, 5, 6-7, 16, 20; Matthew 10:17-22
- WED Dec 27 FEAST OF ST. JOHN, APOSTLE & EVANGELIST** I John 1:1-4;
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; John 20:1-8
- THU Dec 28 FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS** I John 1:5-2:2; Psalm 124:1-5, 7-8
Matthew 2:13-18
- FRI Dec 29** I John 2:3-11; Psalm 96:1-3, 5b-6, 11a; Luke 2:22-35
- SAT Dec 30** I John 2:12-17; Psalm 96:7-10; Luke 2:36-40
- SUN Dec 31 FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS** Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40