Pilgrim Post

November, 2026 Volume 26 issue 11

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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.

Thanksgiving Feast
Sunday, November 22, 2026
following our church service.

Thank you to Dave's Kountry Katering for preparing our meal again this year.

$28 per person or $55 for a family of 3+

Roy and Britta Portenga will provide our entertainment.

Details and sign up sheets are at the Welcome Center.

We ask that you sign up on or before November 8th.

Payment for this may be paid at the Welcome Center, the door, or online: https://fccmuskegon.org



HAPPY THANKSGIVING

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.

We welcome our new members to our church family:
Lucy Lower; Roger Wenk; Rod Puseman

Lucy comes to us from Battle Creek, where she taught school music, piano lessons, and directed church music for over 30 years. She has two grown children and five siblings. In her retirement, she enjoys puzzles, biking, traveling, boating with Captain Roger, and cheering on her MSU Spartans!

Roger has three adult children. He is looking forward to retirement in March after 30 years as a food scientist in Research and Development at the Kellogg Company in Battle Creek. With his partner, Lucy Lower – he is looking forward to sailing, catching big fish on Lake Michigan, biking and traveling to places near and far. He is a proud Muskegon Big Red and graduated from Ferris State University and Michigan State University.

Rod is retired from the U.S. Navy as an Aviation Electronics Technician. He currently serves as a Service Officer with the American Legion and VFW. He was trained as a social worker for the LCMS Church at Concordia University in Seward, NE.

Daylight Savings Time Ends **November 1 at 2 am.**
Set your clocks back one hour before you go to bed on Saturday.

Cookies for Sunday Fellowship

Those whose last names begin with the letters T-Z please bring cookies or treats during the month of November. Homemade cookies or treats are also appreciated as are Gluten free and/or sugar free cookies or bars. Please indicate ingredients as we have many members who have allergies. Many thanks.



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

01 Tim Vander Haar
02 Anna Grinwis; Barb Brott; Cecillia Senecal
05 David Lachniet
06 Cathy Simons
07 Roberta Fleischmann
09 Bruce Bullion; Thea Collier; Willie Ginman
10 Ed Hunt
11 Bob Pummel
12 Brady Perreault; Bruce Miller
13 Micki Zaleski
15 Melissa Wikman
16 Adelyn Witmer; Deanne Hannibal; Joyce Bond
18 Chris McGuigan
20 Jamie Kuzma; Emareece Lucas
21 Shirley Buikema
22 Charde Lowe
23 Deb Witmer
24 David Anacker; Barb Bates-Lalick
27 Charlie Ginman; Kate Bullion; Michelle Kemp
29 Rick Brott; Joel Zuidema; Adam Brandow

LETTER FROM REV. BECKY EMERSON

Hello First Congregational Community,

I always linger at the greetings in Paul's letters to the churches. It seems that "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" is often in his greetings.

This was also the letter-writing protocol of the period he wrote in. However, as I linger at these greetings, I also see myself as a recipient of the blessing of 'grace and peace' every time I read it. It is more than a protocol, but is a blessing, and for each one of us.

Grace and Peace to all of us in this season! Grace is a practical everyday enablement, the Divine 'stuff' that carries us in our lack, that is sufficient for each one of us in our different seasons of life. I know we can theologize grace away as a concept and that is a prodigal waste. Let us not miss the tangible reality of grace, it comes from the Gracious One, who is always present. While grace enables me in my lack, peace steadies me, and both brings me to God's throne of GRACE.

This month brings significant events, including the midterm elections in a few days. May we abide in God's grace and peace as we vote. As we celebrate Thanksgiving, may that same grace and peace surround our families and community. Let us reach out to those who are shut in, missing loved ones, or struggling during the holidays.

There is such joy and strength as we continue to serve one another!

Rev. Dr. Becky Emerson

What's Happening

Tuesday Pantry

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 help in some other way, we are collecting non-expired canned goods on Communion Sundays (first Sunday of each month). Just put them in the baskets in the Narthex.
Many thanks!

Saturday Breakfast (the last Saturday of each month)

Saturday, November 28 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 show up at 8:30 AM if you are willing to volunteer. We offer this free Breakfast on the last Saturday of each month. "Cowboy" offers a Worship Service in our Chapel at 10:45 AM for any who would like to attend.

Saturday Garden*Thank you to all who helped us with our Saturday Garden throughout this summer and Fall. The youth had fun and learned how to garden as well.
A special thank you to Lora Swenson for coordinating all the garden activities and to Tim Koschman for coordinating the monthly summer bike clinics.

Congregational Life Dept Thank you to all who donated winter coats. We will be collecting them through most of this month and distributing them at the November 28 Saturday Breakfast. Our next big event is our Thanksgiving Feast on Sunday, November 22. Dave's Kountry Katering will be back this year and have kept our pricing the same: $28 per person or family of 3 or more $55. Please sign up at the Welcome Center on or before November 8 or you may contact the office and mail the check to FCC. The give button on our website will also have an option for payment. Desserts were a favorite, so we are asking for people to again sign up to bring a dessert. Many thanks.

Christian Education **Life-long Learning —** The most impactful way to counter the rise of Christian Nationalism is through voting. Given the short time until the election, we have front-loaded this topic. We want to do everything we can to get people to the polls, whether by educating them, motivating them, or even driving them there ourselves. The stakes are especially high and we would absolutely welcome your help in this effort! Contact Patty Kelly (231-233-8911) to see how you can be involved. Starting in November Rev. Becky will lead a 3-part series that considers the interplay among three key elements of our transition: A pastoral approach to the wider norms of transitions; good ethics for healthy transitions; and the grace of God's presence and leading. We welcome one and all. Please join us!

Life-long Learning Schedule Through November		
10/18	Next Steps re: Christian Nationalism	Patty & Paul
10/25	***Social Hour***	
11/1	"Reflections on Transitions" (1)	Rev. Becky
11/8	"Reflections on Transitions" (2)	Becky
11/15	"Reflections on Transitions" (3)	Cindy
11/22	***Thanksgiving Feast***	
11/29	***Social Hour***	
12/6	[TBA]	

Trunk or Treat was a success. We had 6 decorated trunks and about 400 children this year. A huge thank you to all who donated candy, organized the event, participated, and posted our fliers and signs.

Building & Grounds Mini split repair is finished, boiler inspection is done and ready for the season.

Missions & Service: Mision of the month for November is both One Great Hour of Sharing and Neighbors in Need. The goal of One Great Hour of Sharing is to provide resources for disaster relief, refugee assistance, and developmental aid around the world and in the United States This is the oldest mission offering of the United Church of Christ. Neighbors in Need are used to support "ministries of justice and compassion." One-third of the total goes to the Council for American Indian Ministries, and the other two-thirds is distributed to grant recipients across the UCC who are engaged in "Projects of direct service and advocacy." We at FCC have received grants in the past to help get our Saturday Breakfast program up and running. Anything you can do to support these causes is very much appreciated. You may pay by check and put the name in the memo of the check or you may donate online on our website.

Worship & Music We meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM-online meetings this winter.
Wednesday's 7 PM Motet Choir Rehearsals.
Wednesdays at 6 PM Canterbury Ringers Rehearsals
Sunday, November 22 service will include Choir and Bells and Brass.



Looking Ahead:

November 28 – Saturday Breakfast 9-10:30 AM
Chapel Service 10:45 AM "Cowboy" Tom Hardy leads

December 5 – Mobile Food Pantry 10 AM our parking lot

December 6 – Annual Candlelight Concert begins at 4 PM

December 12 - Meijer Simply Give donations are tripled on Saturday, Dec. 12 at the North Muskegon Meijer.

December 13 - Muskegon Chamber Choir Concert 3 PM at FCC

December 20 - Impromptu All Congregation Christmas Pageant during our 10:30 AM worship service

Minutes of Governing Board
Monday, October 19, 2026, 6:30 PM

Meeting called to order at 6:33 pm by Jane Clingman-Scott, Past President

Opening prayer offered by Rev. Becky Emerson

Motion to approve October 19, 2026 Governing Board Agenda was moved by Marti Balgooyen and seconded by Judy Dewall. Motion approved as presented.

Motion to approve September 21, 2026 Governing Board Minutes was moved by Joe Dixon and seconded by Sue Rummery. Motion was approved as amended: Marti is chair of Member Care and was representing that department; last month, she was also representing Congregational Life.

Minister's Report

Becky continues to get to know staff. This month she has been involved with Crop Walk, GSA, and the interfaith group, getting to know the Rabbi. She has spent time with shut-ins and is getting to know them, which enjoys. She also has become familiar with the Food Pantry and the Breakfast Garden. She's still visiting w/ dept chairs as they are able to drop in. Becky's installation is postponed until mid-March; UCC is fine with that time frame.

President's Report: Thanks for all of the work each of the departments are doing to help live out the mission of the church and to help bring Becky up to speed. Sorry I could not attend tonight, thanks to Jane for filling in!

Treasurer's Report

Expenses exceeded income for operations by $34,587 for the month of September. An overage was expected due to September being a 3-pay period month. Year-to-date income was higher than expected, while expenses were below budget expectations. We needed to move $12,420 of our Endowment funds into operations for cash flow in September and early October 2026. The Endowment Fund is invested by (1) the Community Foundation and (2) UCF for budget needs.

Gifts received: In September we received $195 in contributions toward the Saturday Breakfast Program and also continued collecting vendor fees for the upcoming Craft Fair to benefit the Minister's Discretionary Fund. We collected $198 in building use fees. There were also contributions to Congregational Life Department's pictorial directory project, the FCC Food Pantry, and our music program.

Addendum To Treasurer's Report (Elisabeth Major). After her appeal to the congregation during service on 10/18,

2 households turned in pledge; 2 more took home materials

2 households increased their pledges; 2 new pledges

Donations to thermostat fund- received 2 donations

Motion to accept the October 189, 2026 Treasurer's Report and place on file. Motion was moved by Steve Chapman and seconded by Judy Dewall. Motion approved as presented.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business: None

Meeting adjourned at 7:03 PM.

Submitted by Michelle Kemp, Clerk **Next meeting: November 19, 2026**

PRELIMINARY MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT for September 2026

	Current Month Actual	Current YTD Actual	2025-2026 YTD Budget	2025-2026 YTD Difference	2025-2026 Annual Budget
Pledged Offerings	$13,317	$78,949	$79,379	$ - 430	$ 365,341
Non-pledged Offerings	$491	$3,242	3,983	$ - 742	22,595
Misc. Income	$400	7,071	1,351	$ 5,720	81,500
Operating Income Endow.	$12,420	22,720	22,720	$ 0	102,726
Total Op. Income	$ 26,628	$ 111,982	$ 107,434	$ 4,548	$ 572,162
Total Op. Expenses	$ 61,215	$ 138,565	$ 145,200	$ - 6,635	$ 572,162
NET TOTAL:	**$ - 34,587**	**$ - 26,583**	**$ - 37,766**	**$ 11,183**	**0**

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Thermostat Endowment Funding Campaign: no new contributions were received in September. $76,910 has been collected as of 09/30/2026. The goal is $200,000 by October of 2028.

The Missions and Service Department is grateful for your generous support for the September Mission of the Month, CWS Crop Walk. Contributions and participation toward that mission as walkers is greatly appreciated. FCC's food programs are beneficiaries of the local Crop Walk funds, which are presently being tabulated. Thank you!

Reminder of Announcement Deadlines:

Our goal is to communicate to the FCC Family accurately. To that end, we have new guidelines in effect. Many thanks for your help.

For printed announcements in Sunday's bulletin requests are to be made to either the Pastor or the Office Manager by **Monday at 1 PM**.

For an announcement in the weekly email requests are to be made to the Director of Music by **Wednesday at 6 PM**.

For verbal announcements on Sunday morning requests are to be made to the Pastor by **Thursday at 5 PM**.

For an announcement in the Pilgrim Post monthly newsletter all requests are to be made to the Office Manager by the 3rd Wednesday of the **prior** month at noon.

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.

Pilgrim Post Are you on the email list to receive our Pilgrim Post? Just let the office know you would like to be emailed with a pdf copy. You can also email the office at: fcc@fccmuskegon.org

NOVEMBER LECTIONARY

SUN Nov 1 **ALL SAINTS** Revelation 7:9-17; Psalm 24:1-6; I John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

MON Nov 2 **ALL SOULS** Wisdom 3:1-9; Psalm 23; Romans 6:3-9; John 6:37-40

TUE Nov 3 Philippians 2:5-11; Psalm 22:25-31; Luke 14:15-24

WED Nov 4 Philippians 2:12-18; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14; Luke 14:25-33

THU Nov 5 Philippians 3:3-8a; Psalm 105:2-7; Luke 15:1-10

FRI Nov 6 Philippians 3:17-4:1; Psalm 122:1-5; Luke 16:1-8

SAT Nov 7 Philippians 4:10-19; Psalm 112:1-2, 5-6, 8-9; Luke 16:9-15

SUN Nov 8 **24th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25 and Psalm 78:1-7 *Or* Amos 5:18-24 and Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-20; or Psalm 70; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13

MON Nov 9 Titus 1:1-9; Psalm 24:1-6; Luke 17:1-6;

TUE Nov 10 Titus 2:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 37:3-4, 18, 23, 27-29, 39; Luke 17:7-10

WED Nov 11 Titus 3:1-7; Psalm 23; Luke 17:11-19

THU Nov 12 Philemon 7-20; Psalm 146:5, 7-10; Luke 17:20-25

FRI Nov 13 II John 4-9; Psalm 119:1-2, 10-11, 17-18; Luke 17:26-37

SAT Nov 14 III John 5-8; Psalm 112:1-6; Luke 18:1-8

SUN Nov 15 **25th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** Judges 4:1-7 and Psalm 123; *or* Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18 and Psalm 90:1-12; I Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:14-30

MON Nov 16 Revelation 1:1-4; 2:1-5; Psalm 1:1-4, 6*);* Luke 18:35-43

TUE Nov 17 Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22; Psalm 15:2-5*;* Luke 19:1-10

WED Nov 18 Revelation 4:1-11; Psalm 150:1-6*;* Luke 19:11-28

THU Nov 19 Revelation 5:1-0; Psalm 149:1-6a, 9b; Luke 19:41-44

FRI Nov 20 Revelation 10:8-11; Psalm 119:14, 24, 72, 103, 111, 131; Luke 19:45-48

SAT Nov 21 Revelation 11:4-12; Psalm 144:1-2, 9-10; Luke 20:27-40

SUN Nov 22 **REIGN OF CHRIST** Ezekiel 34:1-16, 20-24; Psalm 100 *or* Psalm 95:1-7a Ephesians 1L15-23; Matthew 25:31-46

MON Nov 23 Revelation 14:1-5; Psalm 24:1-6; Luke 21:1-4

TUE Nov 24 Revelation 14:14-19; Psalm 96:10-13; Luke 21:5-11

WED Nov 25 Revelation 15:1-4; Psalm 98:1-3, 7-9*;* Luke 21:12-19

THU Nov 26 **THANKSGIVING DAY** Joel 2:21-27; Psalm 126; I Timothy 2:1-7; Matthew 6:25-33

FRI Nov 27 Revelation 20:1-4, 11-21:2; Psalm 84:2-5, 7 *(Response:* Rv 21:3; Luke 21:29-33

SAT Nov 28 Revelation 22:1-7; Psalm 95:1-7; Luke 21:34-36

SUN Nov 29 **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT** Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; I Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

MON Nov 30 Romans 10:9-18; Psalm 18:8-11; Matthew 4:18-22