



FCC PILGRIM PULSE

DECEMBER 2022

A Message from our Pastor... "Preparing for Jesus at Christmas"

Everywhere you look you see it. Everywhere you go you find it. Every newspaper and TV stations advertises it. It is on the radio and decorated all over town. Everyone knows that Christmas is coming. The Christmas season has begun. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that something exciting is about to happen. Something amazing is about to take place.

It was just a few days ago that we celebrated Thanksgiving Day. In many homes there was food, football, family and friends. If you had the TV on you saw the hype around all of the BIG sales that were about to take place. Every store broadcasting their Black Friday Sales and people were waiting with great anticipation for the doors to open. If it wasn't a commercial talking about the sale, it was the news reporting the fact that people were starting to line up days in advance to collect on the door buster bargains. There was an excitement in the air. People watched and waited for the doors to open and then the mad dash to that one item that everyone wanted. This becomes a madhouse of intense emotions. Emotions and passions run high when we anticipate something great. We expect a great feeling from the special events we have been waiting for. We want to know that our waiting was not in vain. We want the build-up to worth the wait.

This past Sunday was the first Sunday of Advent. We begin our journey to Christmas day by preparing ourselves for the trip. Just as Lent prepares us for Easter, Advent prepares us for Christmas. We look with anticipation at Christmas Day. The joy and hope that comes with the birth of our savior excites us as we decorate, make plans and worship.

This being the first week of this journey, I would like us to pause and reflect. I would like for us to look at this Christmas season through the eyes of wonder. This Christmas season I would like for us to engage in meditation and repentance, just like during Lent. As the excitement grows toward that wonderful Christmas morning, the expectation of something great also grows. We wait with anticipation for the birth of the savior, Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus brings us hope for a better tomorrow. We need to enter this Christmas season with high expectation. This Advent season I challenge you remain focused on Christmas and on the real reason for the season. If we can devote as much passion and energy on preparing for Jesus to come as we spend preparing for the Black Friday Sales how differently would live our lives?

In Mark 13:24-37, Jesus speaks of his second coming. Jesus tells his disciples that they need to be ready for his return because when it happens it will happen very quickly. Jesus told them that they need to be ready at all times. How do we stay ready? How do we prepare for Jesus?

Daily devotions and bible study as well as daily prayer and meditation help us to stay focused both mentally and spiritually. It is during these times that we become assured we are ready for his return and we are prepared for the task he has called us to do while we are still here. This Advent season wait and expect God will show you His plan for your life. We never know when God will call us to be his hands and feet this Christmas season, but if we stay focused we will not miss the opportunity to serve Him.

As the excitement of the Christmas season grows and we anticipate the joy the day brings, let's make sure we are preparing for the right thing. We need to make sure we are prepared for the return of the King. If Jesus were to come today would you be ready? Would the people in your life be ready? If you have any doubt then there is no better time than now to begin the journey. Find a church where you can join in the journey. Making sure we are ready for the second coming of Jesus helps us to truly appreciate His first coming at Christmas. Preparing for Jesus is different than preparing for Christmas. Preparing for Jesus is for a lifetime.

Blessings in Christ,
Pastor Ed Milam

If you wish to have your name or your loved one to be placed on our prayer list, please contact the church office. *Please remember you must have permission to do so. Thank you!


IN OUR PRAYERS

OUR MILITARY: Matthew Crittenden, Jordan Varney, Paul Lepley, TJ Curry, Joshua Roose, Stephanie Roose, Melissa Staffen, Rick Grimes, Joe Suchowolec, Griffin Gloden, and Kyle Durdle.

ONGOING PRAYERS FOR:

<i>Lucas Hopkins</i>	<i>Jerry McPherson</i>	<i>Dr. Joe & Valerie Mejia</i>	<i>John Koppenol</i>	<i>Brian Tiffany</i>
<i>Rob Sansom</i>	<i>Gloria McPherson</i>	<i>Ken & Kathy Reed</i>	<i>Wilson & Barb Hoy</i>	<i>J.R. Withey</i>
<i>Nic (Perry)</i>	<i>Mary Ellen Rice</i>	<i>James & Pauline Griffith</i>	<i>Carole Cole</i>	<i>Tom Antor</i>

FCC FAMILY AT CARE FACILITIES:

<i>Lois Hazelwood</i>		<i>-at Hathaway Hills Assisted Living Room #26</i>
<i>Bette Houle</i>		<i>-at The Brook Assisted Living, Cedar Springs</i>
<i>Corla Morgan</i>		<i>-at SHUM RNC, Room #103</i>
<i>Barb & Wilson Hoy</i>		<i>-at Canal View Houghton County Medical Facility</i>
<i>Pat Toth</i>		<i>-at Hathaway Hills Assisted Living, Room #15</i>
<i>Doris Dieckman Marshall</i>		<i>-at Boulder Creek Assisted Living, Room #8</i>
<i>Ray (Cap) Tower</i>		<i>-at Hathaway Hills Assisted Living, Room #12</i>

PRAYERS FOR MEMBERS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

<i>Dawn Dickinson (stage 4 cancer)</i>	<i>Friend of Candy Outman</i>
<i>Jack & Ann Corner</i>	<i>FCC Members and friends to all</i>
<i>Pearl Fulton</i>	<i>Mother of Patrice Fulton-Peacock</i>

SPECIAL PRAYERS FOR:

- *Cap (Ray) Tower*
- *Lois Hazelwood*
- *The family of Kitty Case, Jim Cases stepmom, as she passed away on Tuesday, November 22nd.*

***Thank you to all for your Prayers! Please feel free to send a card to anyone listed above.**

Pastoral Contact Info:

If you are in need of prayers or other assistance, please feel free to email Pastor Ed at pastor.edfccog@gmail.com.

BOARD MEETINGS:

Deacons: Monday, Dec. 12th at 6:30pm
Trustees: Monday, Dec. 19th at 6:30pm

Trustees of the Month: Cindy Hanson and Judy Swartz

Deacon of the Month: Don Gibbs

~ FCC NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS ~

PASTORAL NEWS

- **CHRISTMAS DAY MESSAGE:** This year, as Christmas falls on Sunday, we will not have a service in the Sanctuary on Dec. 25th. Instead, we invite you all to watch a Christmas Message from Pastor Ed, from his home to yours! *We will be posting information on how and where you can watch the message soon!
- **New Member Class:** We are so blessed to have an exciting and active church family. We have all come together to form the Body of Christ. Every one of us plays an important role in the service of God through the ministries of His church. There will be an opportunity for anyone who feels led by the Spirit to learn more about the history, ministries, organization, and beliefs of this Congregational church. Starting in mid-January, we will be holding a series of New Members Classes. Please contact the church office or Pastor Ed for more info if you are feeling led to join this community of faith by becoming a member!
- **THANK YOU!** to all members and friends that attended this Ordination & Installation of Pastor Ed Milam. Pastor Ed & Jenny would like to especially thank all who helped plan the event and dinner! And to those who helped set up and clean up after the event! Your kindness and support is greatly appreciated! We are so blessed to be a part of this FCC Family and Congregation.

CHURCH OFFICE NEWS

The church office hours are Mon. through Thurs. from 9:00-3:30 with a break from 2:00-2:30pm. Please call ahead if you need assistance.

- **Contact Info:** Please update your contact info (new address, email or phone number) to receive church mailings, with the church office. *You need not be a member to receive all the latest news and updates!

CELEBRATIONS

Happy Birthday! To Taylor McPherson (12/1), Pam Koski (12/4), Betty Lincoln (12/9), Jim Case (12/23), and Kevin Venema (12/28).

PARISH NURSE NEWS

Our Nurse is available Mon. and Tues. from 8-4, and Thurs. from 8-12. Call/text (616) 894-7288 for assistance.

- **Medical Assistance:** If you have medical questions, concerns, or need a ride, please call or text Patrice.
- **Mental Health Emergency Number:** call "988" for mental health crisis help.
- **RSV, the flu and COVID** are all hitting our community hard right now. If you feel sick please stay home to get well. Infants, toddlers and the elderly need to be especially careful at this time. Please call if you have any questions.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

- **Winter Curriculum** began on Nov. 27 with learning about Advent. The preschool uses the same curriculum and our own Pastor Ed is leading them in the lesson.
- **Sunday School Changes:** Welcome, Tim Hyde to our teaching staff in Grades 3-5! There is no Sunday School on Dec. 11, because Miss Candy is hosting a Christmas Pageant that day!!! All kids are invited to participate. *Please contact Candy, if your child would like to be apart of the pageant.
- **Vacation:** Our teachers deserve a vacation so there is **no Sunday School on Dec. 11th or 25th** (as there is no church Service) and **no class on Jan. 1st**. Sunday School will resume on Jan. 8th.
- **Acolyte Training:** Calling all children aged 8 and above to get trained to light the candles at church and to refresh those currently lighting. Please meet Miss Fran after church on Sun., Jan. 8 in the sanctuary.

PF YOUTH NEWS

Our next meetings are Dec. 4th and 18th after service. Church youth are encouraged to join us to plan for upcoming events and fellowship trips!

- **Dec 18th** is our Annual Christmas party from 4-6pm!
- **Dec. 24th** we will place luminaries in front of the church and help with the Christmas Eve service at 7pm.
- To join the group or contact Claude Johnson at claudej2002us@yahoo.com.

MUSIC COMMITTEE NEWS

Special Music Performances for December:

- Dec. 4: Chancel Choir
- Dec. 11: Christmas Pageant by Praise Choir and Sunday School Children
- Dec. 18: Chancel Choir
- Dec. 24 (7 & 11pm services): Performances by The Chancel Choir and various soloists!
- If you are of high school age or older and interested in singing with the Chancel Choir, contact Deb Dieckman, the office or come to a rehearsal. No audition is necessary!
- Chancel Choir Rehearsal: is Dec. 4 at 9:30am and Dec. 18 at 9:30am, in the sanctuary. *There will also be practice on Dec. 11 at 9:15am in fellowship hall.

CHILDREN'S PRAISE CHOIR NEWS

The group practices every Tues. evenings from 4-5pm and sings once a month at our Sunday Services. This group is for children ages pre-k through middle school. Please come join us one and all!

- **Donations Needed:** of individually wrapped snacks and/or juice for the group. Please drop off donations in the preschool or the front office marked "Praise Choir Snacks". *Thank you!* To those of you who have donated to the group so far!

DEACONS

- **Next Meeting:** is **Monday**, Dec. 12, at 6:30pm. Please note the day change!
- **Poinsettias:** Have you reserved your plants yet? The deadline is coming up. Poinsettias will grace the sanctuary for Christmas Eve and then you can take them as you leave or have them delivered to those unable to attend church at this time. If you don't have a form, please **call the office by Dec. 5** to put your order in memory or honor of a loved one.
- **Christmas Services:** Please join us on Christmas Eve at 7pm for the family candlelight service or at 11pm for a candlelight communion service. There will be an offering collected at these services that goes to the Deacons Discretionary Fund to help those in need.
- **Christmas Day:** Our service will be available to watch from the comfort of your home! As Pastor Ed will deliver a Christmas Message from his home.
- **Serving the Church:** There are many opportunities to serve FCC like Coffee Service, Sunday School teaching, Nursery duty, Children's Sermons. Please see the sign-up sheets outside the office to volunteer.
- **Coffee Service:** Please consider signing up for Coffee Service. Thank you to those who have hosted multiple times so far. Please do not worry about making elaborate treats. The Deacons want this time to be enjoyable fellowship with the least amount of work.
- **The Advent Season** has been planned out to have two services on Christmas Eve, Sat., Dec. 24th with a Family Candlelight Service at 7pm and a Communion Candlelight Service at 11pm. With Christmas falling on a Sunday, the decision was made to have families watch a streaming of an uplifting message from Pastor Ed in the comfort of their homes, while enjoying family time! *Watch online at our Facebook page or YouTube Channel.
- **2022 Advent Mission:** We are taking donations for the adult foster care home in Gowen, *Rest Assured*. There are 20 male and female residents in need! We are collecting items until Dec. 14. Here is a list of items to we are collecting: blankets, pillows, heavy robes, warm footies/slippers, indoor "jackets", lap blankets, prizes for bingo (dollar store finds), large print crosswords, word searches, mugs, reading glasses, hairbrushes, toothbrushes, candy of all kinds, pop, beef jerky, coloring books, crayons or color pencils, food, any or all non-perishable food, canned meats, vegetables, fruits, cereals, soups, hot chocolate mixes, even food gift cards would help, personal care items, shampoo, deodorant, lotion, toothpaste, shaving cream, razors, adult pull ups (not adult diapers). *If you are unable to shop, please make a cash donation labeled DDF Mission on the memo line and food items will be purchased for you!

PRESCHOOL NEWS

Our children are now preparing for the Christmas Season. We are learning about the Birth of Christ our Savior! We will have a christmas party in the class room on Dec. 15th where the children will watch a movie and exchange gifts. We will then have a Christmas Concert that night at 7pm with a visit from Santa followed by an ice cream social in Fellowship Hall!

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP NEWS

- **Chrismon Event:** We are hosting a Chrismon making time of fellowship and fun at 1pm on Sat., Dec. 10, with soup and sandwich. A Chrismon is an ornament that is always made by hand and given as a gift for others to commemorate the Christian art of giving at this time of the year. Women are welcome to come enjoy the fellowship while doing a craft. You don't need to be "crafty" there are tasks for everyone to participate in.
- **More Than Thank You!** We are grateful for the wonderful volunteers who helped with the Ordination Dinner, baking for the Bake Sale, shoppers who purchased the goodies, shoppers who bought Terri Lynn Nuts, and all those who helped decorate the church for Advent. It has been an incredibly busy time of the year and it could not be accomplished without YOU! When we make money, that is turned around to help the church, the community, and other needs as they arise.
- **Bethany Circle Members:** Please get your reservation into Fran Gibbs for our Christmas party on Dec. 7. Please bring a wrapped gift of \$5 or less value. We will order off the menu and have a private room at the Winter Inn at 6:30 pm.
- **Winslow Circle Members:** Will meet as usual on Wed., Dec. 7 at 1:00 pm.

MUTUAL MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

We are always looking for ways for our congregation to be involved in our Sunday Service!

- **Nursery:** Volunteers needed for the Nursery! A background check is required. Please contact the church office for more information
- **Liturgist:** If you would like to join our rotation of readers, please contact the church office. *If you are already on the rotation, no need to contact the office, unless you would like specific dates or would like to be taken off the list.
- **Sound Techs:** We are still looking for volunteers to learn our sound booth system and help with streaming our services. If interested, contact the church office (training is available).

Christmas Poinsettias 2022

We invite you to place a poinsettia in the sanctuary in memory or in honor of a friend or loved one. The Deacons are offering you a convenient, affordable and mission-centered way to order your poinsettia through the church office. For the cost of \$10.00 per plant, you can help support our Deacon's Discretionary Fund and celebrate or remember a loved one. You may also choose to have your poinsettia delivered to someone on the friendship list.



Orders MUST be turned into the church office before Monday, December 5th. Simply fill out the order form below. You may pick up your poinsettia after the 11:00 PM service on Christmas Eve, or during the week of December 26th.

We are offering a 6" potted poinsettia. **Please indicate below the number of plants and color(s) you would like to order along with who it is in Memory or in Honor of.**

Name (please print): _____

Mark #amount/number requested:

Red _____ White _____ Pink _____ Jingle Bells _____ Marble _____

of plants _____ X **\$10.00** = \$ _____ total

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: *First Congregational Church or FCCoG

☐ In Memory of ☐ In Honor of: _____

☐ In Memory of ☐ In Honor of: _____

☐ In Memory of ☐ In Honor of: _____

☐ In Memory of ☐ In Honor of: _____

☐ **Yes, I would like to pick up my plant(s).**

☐ **No, please deliver my plant(s) to someone on the prayer list.**

****MAKE SURE TO TURN IN ORDERS
BEFORE MONDAY, DECEMBER 5TH!!!***

~ December 2022 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 11a GAMA 4:30 Scouts (all) 7:30 AA	2	3
4 Communion 9:30 Choir Practice 9:30 Sunday School 9:30 Bible Study 10:30 Worship Special Music – <i>Chancel Choir</i> 12p PF Youth Mtg. 3p Venture	5 Christmas Poinsettia Orders DUE!	6 4p Praise Choir	7 10a PURLS 1p Winslow Pearl Harbor Day 6:30 Bethany	8 4:30 Scouts (all) 7:30 AA	9	10 1p Chrismon Event
11 9:30 Bible Study 10:30 Worship Special Music – <i>Christmas Pageant</i>	12 6:30 Deacons	13 4p Praise Choir	14 10a PURLS Advent Mission donations DUE!	15 8:30a Preschool Christmas Party 4:30 Scouts (all) 7p Preschool Christmas Concert 7:30 AA	16	17
18 9:30 Sunday School 9:30 Bible Study 10:30 Worship Special Music – <i>Chancel Choir</i> 12p PF Youth Mtg 3p Venture	19	20	21 10a PURLS <div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Christmas Break Dec. 21, 2022, to Jan 3, 2023 </div>	22 4:30 Scouts (all) 7:30 AA	23 Office Closed	24 Christmas Eve
25 NO SERVICE 	26 Christmas (observed) Office Closed	27 Office Closed	28 10a PURLS *Office Open from 10-2	29 Office Closed	30 Office Closed	31 New Year's Eve
<div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Christmas Break Dec. 21, 2022, to Jan 3, 2023 </div>						
				7:30 AA		

***Make sure to watch a Christmas Message from the comfort of your home, with Pastor Ed Milam at 10:30am on Sunday, December 25th!**

Calendar Notes:

~ January 2023 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Communion & New Year's Day! 9:30 Bible Study 10:30 Worship Special Music – <i>Deb Dieckman</i> 12p PF Youth Mtg 3p Venture	2 New Year's Day (observed) Office Closed	3 4p Praise Choir	4 10a PURLS School Back In Session 6:30 Bethany	5 4:30 Scouts (all) 7:30 AA	6	7
8 9:30 Sunday School 9:30 Bible Study 10:30 Worship Special Music – <i>Chancel Choir</i>	9	10 4p Praise Choir 6:30 Deacons	11 10a PURLS	12 4:30 Scouts (all) 7:30 AA	13	14
15 9:30 Sunday School 9:30 Bible Study 10:30 Worship Special Music – <i>Praise Choir</i> 12p PF Youth Mtg 3p Venture	16 MLK Day	17 4p Praise Choir	18 10a PURLS	19 4:30 Scouts (all) 7:30 AA	20	21
22 9:30 Sunday School 9:30 Bible Study 10:30 Worship Special Music – <i>Chancel Choir</i>	23 6:30 Trustees	24 1p WF Board 4p Praise Choir	25 10a PURLS	26 4:30 Scouts (all) 7:30 AA	27	28
29 9:30 Sunday School 9:30 Bible Study 10:30 Worship Special Music – <i>TBA</i>	30	31				

Calendar Notes:

2022 Advent Mission

"Rest Assured Adult Foster Care" in Gowen

Please consider donating the following items to help this organization with their 20 male and female residents' needs!

Collection begins November 14th until December 14th.



Winter is Upon Us – please help us stay warm with these items!

Blankets, Pillows

Heavy Robes, Warm Footies/Slippers

Indoor "Jackets"

Lap Blankets

Miscellaneous Items:

Prizes for Bingo (Dollar Store Finds)

Large Print Crosswords, Word Searches

Mugs, Reading Glasses

Hairbrushes, Toothbrushes

Candy of all kinds, Pop, Beef Jerky

Coloring Books, Crayons or Color Pencils

Food:

Any or all non-perishable food!

Canned meats, vegetables, fruits, cereals, Soups, Hot Chocolate Mixes

*Even food gift cards would help

Personal Care Items:

Shampoo, deodorant, lotion, toothpaste, shaving cream, razors

Adult Pull Ups (not adult diapers)