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In just a few days we will celebrate Thanksgiving. For over two hundred years, individual colonies and states celebrated their own days of thanksgiving to celebrate various occasions. Let’s take a look at the beginnings of our Thanksgiving Day tradition.

In September 1620, a small ship called the Mayflower left Plymouth, England, carrying 102 passengers. Among the people on that ship were an assortment of religious separatists seeking a new home where they could freely practice their faith along with the promise of prosperity and land ownership in the "New World." After a treacherous and uncomfortable crossing that lasted 66 days, they dropped anchor near the tip of Cape Cod, far north of their intended destination at the mouth of the Hudson River. One month later, the Mayflower crossed Massachusetts Bay, where the Pilgrims, as they are now commonly known, began the work of establishing a village at Plymouth. These brave Pilgrims are the forefathers of what has become the Congregational Church. The First Congregational Church of Greenville has roots that lead back to Plymouth.

In November 1621, after the Pilgrims’ first corn harvest proved successful, Governor William Bradford organized a celebratory feast and invited a group of around 90 Native American allies, including the Wampanoag chief Massasoit. This became known as America’s “first Thanksgiving”.

For those of us that enjoy Thanksgiving pies and treats, I have some interesting facts. Historians have suggested that many of the dishes were likely prepared using traditional Native American spices and cooking methods. Because the Pilgrims had no oven and the Mayflower’s sugar supply had dwindled by the fall of 1621, the meal would not have featured pies, cakes, or other desserts, which have become a hallmark of our contemporary Thanksgiving celebrations.

During the American Revolution, the Continental Congress designated one or more days of thanksgiving a year, and in 1789 George Washington issued the first Thanksgiving proclamation by the national government of the United States; in it, he called upon Americans to express their gratitude for the happy conclusion to the country’s war of independence and the successful ratification of the U.S. Constitution. His successors John Adams and James Madison also designated days of thanks during their presidencies.

In 1863, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln declared this about Thanksgiving: *“As a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.”*

President Lincoln announced that Thanksgiving Day would be celebrated on the final Thursday in November, and it was celebrated on that day every year until 1939 when Franklin D. Roosevelt moved the holiday up one week. In 1941, President Roosevelt signed a bill making Thanksgiving the fourth Thursday in November.

In the Bible, thanksgiving means devotion, sacrifice, praise, and service. Thanksgiving means to glorify God and give thanks to Him for all the provisions He has blessed us with. Thanksgiving, in the Bible, focuses upon relationships and the relationship between God and man. Upon their arrival at New Plymouth, the Pilgrims composed The Mayflower Compact, which honored God. True thanksgiving begins with acknowledging God as faithful, earnestly giving Him thanks, in advance, for His abundant blessings. The Bible is full of references to giving thanks. Here are a couple of verses that you can use this Thanksgiving: *“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)* and *“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!” (Psalm 107:1).*

This Thanksgiving, as we gather to celebrate, let us pause and truly reflect on the great blessings God has given us in the past year. We have gone through many ups and downs. We have journeyed, like the Pilgrims, through some rough seas. We have made it through the storms and now we have the chance to say “Thanks”. May this Thanksgiving be a blessing to all. – In Christ, Pastor Ed

***A Message from our Pastor…”Giving Thanks”***

FCC PILGRIM PULSE

**December 2023**

**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!**

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| **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:*** |
| *Lucas Hopkins**Rob Sansom**Roxy Rice* | *Wilson & Barb Hoy**Alan Kingsbury**Tom Deal* | *Dr. Joe & Valerie Mejia**Ken & Kathy Reed**Yvonne Elvert* | *Jerry McPherson**Holly Case**Kody Wood* | *Trudy Petersen**Darlene Petersen**Vincent Snow* |
| ***FCC Family At Care Facilities:*** |
| *Barb & Wilson Hoy**Pat Toth**Doris Dieckman Marshall**Cap (Ray) Tower* | *-at Canal View Houghton County Medical Facility**-at Hathaway Hills Assisted Living, Room #15**-at Boulder Creek Assisted Living, Room #8**-at Hathaway Hills Assisted Living, Room #10* |
| ***Special Prayers for Members, Family and Friends:*** |
| * *Becky Coles (daughter of Carolyn Coles and niece of Darlene Petersen)*
* *Lynn Pyle (grandfather of Eli Pyle, preschool student) for recovery*
* *Ken and Kathy Reed*
* *Cap (Ray) Tower*
* *Catrina Walton (friend of Scott Horn) for pancreatic cancer treatment*
 |

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

***Prayer Notes:***



**Pastoral Contact Info:**

**If you are in need of prayers or other assistance, please call the office to make an appointment or email Pastor Ed at pastor.edfccog@gmail.com.**

**Trustees of the Month:** Cindy Hanson and Judy Swartz

**Deacon of the Month:** Don Gibbs

**BOARD MEETINGS:**

Deacons: Tues., Dec. 12th at 6:30pm.

Trustees: Mon., Dec. 18th at 6:30pm.

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| **Pastoral News** |

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| **Restoration and Preservation for Our Church** |

**~ FCC News And Announcements ~**

* **A Message of Thanks:** “We want to express our deepest appreciation and thanks for all the kindness you have shown to us. We are blessed to know that we have a church family that loves and cares for us. We feel the same love and caring for all of you. Your cards, notes, letters, and gifts as well as your prayers, encouragement and fellowship have been so kind and generous. We are blessed beyond words to be a part of this family of believers. I am honored to be the pastor of this wonderful congregation. Thanks again for everything you all do to serve God and love each other. In Christ, Pastor Ed & Jenny Milam”
* **New Members and Baptisms:** If you would like to join or if you would like more info on transferring your membership, please contact the office.
* **Baptisms:** for any member that would like to have their child or would themselves, like to be rebaptized to “refresh” your faith in the Holy Spirit, contact the office and we can schedule your baptism on an individual basis.
* **Adult Bible Study** meets every Sunday at 9:30am. Nursery service is available, and coffee is available. We will be on “break” beginning Dec. 17th and will resume on Jan. 7, 2024.

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| **Advent Season News** |

Mark your calendar for our **Christmas Eve Services** on Sun., Dec. 24th! There will be a Family Candlelight Service at 7pm, designed for families and will end in beautiful passing of candlelight to all those in attendance. And a Communion and Candlelight Service at 11pm. (Please note that there will **not** be a morning service Dec. 24.). Poinsettia pick up will be available after the 11pm service and on Dec. 17 from 9-12pm.

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| **Stewardship News** |

Dear Church Family: As 2023 comes to a close, it’s time to set our course for 2024. This past year saw exceptional new leadership, new memberships, returning families, new and renewed programs and a special closeness of our church family centered around the teachings of our one true leader, Jesus Christ. Stewardship is a vital portion of our continued growth and vitality. It is particularly important for our leadership to be able to plan the churches financial direction with your commitment. We would very much appreciate your intended pledge to enable us to plan various programs and financial requirements for 2024. We also understand that increased costs for everything we touch effects church expenses and your ability to maintain your own money matters. We prayerfully ask for your support however you are able. Your gifts and participation will allow us to maintain our ministry and implement important programs within our church and throughout our community. Please take the time to prayerfully consider how your time, talent, and treasures can be counted on as part of your calling to follow Jesus here in this part of his body, our church. Above all, your generosity honors God and his desire for a better life for all of us. Sincerely, Your Stewardship Committee

* Stewardship cards are still available! AND new Tithing boxes will be available soon.

We continue to thank all who have contributed to our church restoration and preservation project. If you are still interested in contributing, see the information below. All contributions are lovingly appreciated! Progress to date:

* The roof work is completed.
* The exterior brick repair is complete.
* HVAC work is ongoing and nearing completion.
* Painting of all exterior trim will begin in the spring.
* Work to the rose window and remaining stained glass windows, are scheduled for early spring 2024.

****Again, thank you for your continued support. May God be with you and Bless you always. ~ The *Restoration & Preservation Project Committee*

Scan our new QR code or visit:

 <https://tithe.ly/give?c=6959110> to sign up to give today!

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| **Church Office News** |

**Office hours** are Mon. – Thurs. from 9am to 3:30pm with a break from 2-2:30pm. Please call ahead for assistance or leave a message on the office phone.

* The Office will be CLOSED on Dec. 25-26 and Dec. 28-29. The office will be OPEN on Wed., Dec. 27 from 9am to noon. Poinsettias may be picked up during office hours on the 27th.
* **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!

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| **Parish Nurse News** |

Our Nurse is available Mon. and Tues. from 8-4, and Thurs. from 8-12. For medical questions or need a ride, please call/text Patrice at (616) 894-7288.

* **Blood pressure checks** are offered after church on Sunday mornings. See Patrice in the church lobby.

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| **Celebration News** |

* **Free COVID tests** are available; delivered by mail to your home. To order go to COVIDTest.gov or call 1-800-232-0233. \*There are also free tests availabe in the lobby or by the back door.
* ***Happy Birthday!*** To Taylor McPherson (12/1), Pam Koski (12/4), Betty Lincoln (12/9), Jim Case (12/23), and Kevin Venema (12/28).
* ***Congratulations!*** To proud parents Joshua & Emily Franklin who welcomed Valentina Franklin on Nov. 1. She was born at 12:51am weighing 5lbs. 14 oz. & 19” long. She was welcomed by her big sisters, Heidi & Elizabeth and Grandparents Tim & Stephanie Hyde. ***AND*** To Jack & Ann Corner, who are blessed and pleased to welcome 2 new great-grandsons to the family! Grover Briggs Corner (Aug. 9). Son of Alex & Caitlyn Corner and sister Theadora. And Louis Richard DeVries (Nov. 2), son of Brian & Hannah DeVries and brother Deidrick and Rhett.

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| **Christian Ed News**  |

Special Music Performances for December:

* + December 3: Janet Tower and Cindy Perry

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| **Chancel Choir News** |

* + December 10: Chancel Choir
	+ December 17: Children’s Christmas Pageant!
	+ December 24 (7pm): Chancel Choir
	+ December 24 (11pm): *TBD*
	+ December 31: Morgan Venema

**Special Music Volunteers:** If you would like to sing with the choir, or provide special music, please contact Deb Dieckman or the church office.

* + **Practices:** are Dec. 3 and 10 at 9:30am in the sanctuary. Watch our bulletins and January newsletter for practice and perfomance times (after the new year).

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| **Praise Choir News** |

Join us Sun., Dec. 17th as our Praise Choir and Sunday School Children, perform a Christmas Pageant, “The Greatest Gift” at our Sunday Service!

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| **Deacons News** |

* **Next Meeting:** will be Tues., Dec. 12th at 6:30pm.
* **Angel Tree 2023:** The deacons are sponsoring an Angel Tree this year to support Teens 15-19 who have insecure food, housing, and clothing right here in Greenville. There are items left on the display board or you can make a cash donation and the shopping will be done for you! Other requests from the school are individually wrapped snacks (muffins, chips, granola bars, etc), and hygiene items (deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shower gel, etc). Please return wrapped items by December 13 with the tag attached. Thank you for giving joy to this underserved group of students!
* **Christmas Poinsettias** orders due by Dec. 3. Plants are $10 each and can be in honor or memory of loved ones. Forms are available outside the office or call the office to get your order in ASAP. You may pick up your plants after the 11pm service on Christmas Eve or Wed., Dec. 27 between 9am and Noon.
* **Pulpit Supply:** Pastor Ed is conducting a family wedding in Florida on Dec. 3. Don Gibbs is pulpit supply for that day, assisted by Emily Suchowolec. \*Communion will be moved to Dec. 10.
* **Christmas Potluck:** Let us celebrate the Children’s Pageant on Dec. 17 by joining in a potluck in Fellowship Hall! Come One, and All! Please bring a dish to pass and your table service. Beverages will be provided.
* **Christmas Day Message:** Pastor Ed will broadcast a family message as you enjoy the Christmas Holiday surrounded by loved ones. Be sure to tune in Christmas Day!
* Sunday, December 31 church resumes at 10:30.
* **Volunteers:** if you would like to help with coffee service or give a childrens message, there are sign up sheets by the church bulletin board. \*Dates are still available!

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| **PF Youth News** |

To join the group or for more info on upcoming PF Youth trips, call/text Claude Johnson at 616-894-5595 or email: claudej2002us@yahoo.com.

* **Sunday School Classes** are on Dec. 3rd and 10th. We are then on break until Jan. 7, 2024 – when everyone is back in school. \*There will not be Sunday School on Dec. 17th as that is the Chilren’s Christmas Pageant.
* **Children’s Message Volunteers:** If you have a personal story, or a message that you would like to share, please sign up outside the office. Please limit your message to no more than 4 minutes.

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| **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 chirstmas party in the class room on Dec. 19th 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!

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| **Women’s Fellowship News** |

* **Circle Members:**Christmas parties (for both groups) are on Wed., Dec. 6. Winslow will meet at Winter Inn at 12pm (RSVP to Rosel Eagles). Bethany Circle will also meet at Winter Inn at 6:30pm (RSVP to Fran Gibbs) \*Bethany group will order off the menu. Please contact the group leaders for more information. \***Note:** There are NO Circle meetings in January.
* **Terri Lynn Nuts:** will be for sale for the next two weeks in the church lobby. Items available: $14 ea. deluxe mixed nuts, pistachios, honey roasted cashews, and praline pecans. $12 ea. milk choc. bridge mix (fruit & nut), dark choc. sea salt caramels, and malted milk balls. $10 ea. milk choc. raisins, milk choc. peanuts, and gummi bears.
* **Christmas Bazaar:** “Our Grateful Hearts” Our hearts are so full of love and gratitude to our Church family. So many hands always make light work. Women’s Fellowship was overjoyed to have more than 25 “helping hands” along with several youth setting up tables, preparing food, decorating tables, selling baked goods and lunch. A family of faith and love , we are blessed to have your support for our ministries. We hope to be helping many in our community in the next few months. With our profit of our $1650.00. Because we are a congregation that cares! God’s love to you all! ~Women’s Fellowship.
* **Haning of the Greens: *Thank you!*** To over 20 helpers who came in on Nov. 28 to help decorate the church for the Advent Season! Many hands made light work! 😊
* **Boxing Up Day:** Tues., Jan. 9th at 10am! Please help to take down and carefully store our precious Christmas decorations until next Advent Season!
* **Chrismons:** Come join the fun on Sat., Dec. 9th at 1pm to make Chrismons for families on Christmas Eve. “Chris” stands for Christ and “Mon” stands for Monogram so that we can remember the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ. We will have a simple lunch and plenty of fun for crafters and non-crafters alike!

**~ December 2023 ~**

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| ***Sun*** | ***Mon*** | ***Tue*** | ***Wed*** | ***Thu*** | ***Fri*** | ***Sat*** |
| A manger with camels and a star  Description automatically generated | **1** | **2** |
| **3 First Sunday**  **of Advent**9:30 Choir Practice9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *Janet Tower & Cindy Perry***\*Poinsettia Orders Due**\*Terri Lynn Nut Sales3p Venture | **4** | **5**4p Praise Choir | **6**10a PURLS1p Winslow6:30 Bethany | **7*****Pearl Harbor***5p Scouts (Den)7:30 AA | **8** | **9****1:00p Chrismon****Making** |
| **10 *Communion***9:30 Choir Practice9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *Chancel Choir*\*Terri Lynn Nut Sales | **11** | **12**4p Praise Choir6:30 Deacons | **13**10a PURLS | **14**5p Scouts (Den)7:30 AA | **15**5p Bartrom Rehearsal Dinner | **16** |
| **17 *Children’s*** ***Christmas Pageant***10:30 Worship\*Church Potluck\*3p Venture | **18**6:30 Trustees | **19**11a Preschool Christmas Parties7p Preschool Christmas Pagent | **20**10a PURLS***Christmas Break begins for Preschool*** | **21**5p Scouts (Pack)7:30 AA | **22*****Christmas Break Dec. 21, 2023 to Jan. 3, 2024*** | **23** |
| **24 *Christmas*** ***Eve***6p Choir Practice7p Candlelight Service11p Communion & Candlelight Service | **25 *Merry******Christmas!******Christmas Break – Dec. 20, 2023 to Jan. 3, 2024******A red and silver text  Description automatically generated*** | **26*****Office Closed*** | **27**10a PURLSOffice open9-12 | **28**7:30 AA | **29*****Office Closed*** | **30** |
| **31****New Year’s Eve**10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *Morgan Venema* | ***Calendar Notes:***  |

**~ January 2024 ~**

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| ***Sun*** | ***Mon*** | ***Tue*** | ***Wed*** | ***Thu*** | ***Fri*** | ***Sat*** |
|  | A colorful numbers on a black background  Description automatically generated**1** | **2*****Christmas Break Dec. 21, 2023 to Jan. 3, 2024******Office Closed***4p Praise Choir | **3**10a PURLS1p Winslow6:30 Bethany | **4*****School Resumes (all)***5p Scouts (Den)7:30 AA | **5** | **6** |
| **7 *Communion*** ***and Baptism of the Lord***9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *TBA*3p Venture | **8** | **9****10a Boxing-up Day!**4p Praise Choir | **10**10a PURLS | **11**5p Scouts (Den)7:30 AA | **12** | **13** |
| **14**9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *Praise Choir* | **15*****MLK Day*** | **16**4p Praise Choir | **17**10a PURLS | **18**5p Scouts (Den)7:30 AA | **19** | **20** |
| **21**9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *TBA*3p Venture | **22**6:30 Trustees | **23**4p Praise Choir | **24**10a PURLS | **25**5p Scouts (Pack)7:30 AA | **26** | **27** |
| **28**9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study 10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *TBA* | **29** | **30**4p Praise Choir | **31** | ***Happy New Year!******Wishing you a Happy New Year and blessed year ahead. May God’s light guide your way in 2024.*** |

***Calendar Notes:***

* + - **FINAL REMINDER -**

**Christmas Poinsettias 2023**

****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 in by Sunday, December 3rd.** Simply fill out the order form below. You may pick up your poinsettia after the 7:00pm and 11:00pm service on Christmas Eve.

**\*Please indicate below the number of plants you would like to order along with who it is in Memory or Honor of.**

**Name** (please print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**\*Please indicate number of plants requested below:**

**Red \_\_\_\_\_ White \_\_\_\_\_ or Jingle Bells (white flecks on red) \_\_\_\_\_**

**\*Please make checks payable to*:******First Congregational Church*** *or* ***FCC***

**□** 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***

***BY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3RD!!!***