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***A Message from our Pastor…”Starting off Strong”***

Remember when your mother said that breakfast was the most important meal of the day. Well, she was right. Studies have shown that eating a well-balanced breakfast is the best thing a person can do to promote better health. These studies have also shown the people who start their day off right (meaning with a good breakfast) live longer, happier lives. There must be something to starting the day off right. Now I am not saying that the occasional donut and coffee is a bad thing. I look forward to the mornings when we head to the donut shop for this tasty morning treat. The truth is that we need to fuel our bodies with the correct balance of proteins, vitamins, minerals, and carbohydrates. When we provide our bodies with a balanced diet, it works and functions better. We have improved concentration and performance in the classroom or the boardroom as well as more strength and endurance to engage in physical activity. Who cannot use more of these benefits?

This is the beginning of a new year. Some of us make resolutions to get into better physical shape. We vow that we are going to eat better, work-out and lose weight. The fitness industry spends millions to promote the next best program; clothing lines that make you look good when work out, DVDs, equipment and every kind of supplement imaginable that will help you to develop your body into perfection. We spend countless hours studying these products to determine which combination will work for us. It can be overwhelming. Nevertheless, we plunge forward with our plan for better physical health. We know what needs to be done; we just need to do it. We have great expectation that 2024 will be the year we get our bodies in great physical shape. I am going to focus on that, and I encourage everyone who is striving for better health in the next year to stay focused and determined to improve themselves physically.

Let me ask you a quick question. If you are going to dedicate time and effort into getting into better physical condition, how much time will you dedicate to your spiritual condition? Do you have any plans made to get into better “spiritual” shape? It is of the utmost importance that we focus time and effort on our spiritual condition. God has big plans for all of us in 2024. When we spend time in prayer, bible study, worship and serving others, God shows us His plan for our lives. The Holy Spirit will then guide and direct us. The bible says in Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” The prophet, Jeremiah writes that God has a plan for us, but we need to focus on Him if we are to see and understand the plan. God wants to reveal His plan to us. He wants nothing more in 2024 then to spend more time with us. He desires nothing more than for us to want to spend time with Him. When we feed ourselves spiritually, and spend time learning God’s plan for us, we not only feel better physically, but we have hope, strength, and confidence that God is in control.

In 2024, let us all focus on every area of our lives. We need to make sure we are taking care of our bodies, but most importantly let’s make sure we are attending to the condition of our spirit. Let’s get off to a good start in 2024, as God has big plans for us this year. I look forward to spending some time working out spiritually (and physically) with you this coming year.

Your brother in Christ, Pastor Ed

FCC PILGRIM PULSE

**February 2024**

**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* | *Alan Kingsbury*  *Tom Deal*  *Becky Coles* | *Dr. Joe & Valerie Mejia*  *Ken & Kathy Reed*  *Coleen Venema* | *Kody Wood*  *Catrina Walton*  *Lynn Pyle* | *Vincent Snow*  *Judi Snyder*  *Patty Ritzema* |
| ***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:*** | | | | |
| * *Helen Appleman (mother of Judi Snyder)* * *Stacy Galick (daughter of Darlene Petersen)* * *Gavin Hearld (great-grandson of Darlene Petersen)* * *Darcie Jorgensen (for recovery from recent surgery)* * *Terri Leslie-Fox (for recovery from recent surgery)* * *Baby Vincent Snow (for recent leg surgery)* * *The Family of Ken Reed for his passing on January 19.* | | | | |

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

***Prayer Notes:***

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**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:** Dan Eagles and Larry Snow

**Deacon of the Month:** Terri Merritt

**BOARD MEETINGS:**

Deacons: Feb. 13th at 6:30pm

Trustees: Mon., Feb. 26th at 6:30pm.

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| **Pastoral News** |

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| **Parish Nurse News** |

**~ FCC News And Announcements ~**

* **New Members:** If you would like to join or if you would like more info on transferring your membership, please contact the church office or speak with Pastor Ed.
* **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 and coffee is available.

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| **Annual Meeting Reports** |

As we prepare for the Annual Meeting that will be held later this year, this is a reminder to all Church Leaders to turn in your 2023 Annual Report to the church office by Wed., Jan. 31st.

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| **Stewardship News** |

**\*New tithing boxes** are now available in the Narthex before you enter the Sanctuary, or see a Deacon to locate your box. If you do not see your box, or would like one assigned to you, please contact the church office. Tithing pledge cards are also available in the Narthex if you would like one.

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

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

* The roof and exterior brick work is completed.
* HVAC work is ongoing.
* Painting of all exterior trim will begin in the spring.
* Work to the rose window and remaining stained glass windows, are currently underway!

Qr code

Description automatically generatedThank 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.

* **Contact Info:** Please update your contact info (address, email or phone number) to receive church mailings, with the church office. You need not be a member to receive our newsletters and mailings. \*Please contact the office to update if you would like to receive newsletters via email or by mail.

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.
* **Free COVID tests** are savailable and delivered by mail to your home. To order go to COVIDTest.gov or call 1-800-232-0233. \*There are also free tests still availabe in the lobby or by the back door.
* The Mid Michigan District Health Department in Stanton is offering free radon test kits to those living in our county. Radon exposure is second only to cigarette smoking in causing lung cancer. Radon is oderless, it can only be detected by testing.
* **Thank you!** To Patty & Jim Ritzema for the donation of two new (collapsable) canes.

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| **Celebration News** |

***Happy Birthday!*** To Patty Ritzema (2/1), Ellia Devitt (2/5), Rex Venema (2/10), Jerry Jones (2/12), Nancy Staffen (2/14), Coleen Venema (2/15), Michele Kocher (2/17), Barb Hoy (2/19), Patrick Emerson (2/20), Celeste Faber (2/24), and Mary Phillips (2/24). ***Happy Anniversary!*** To Roger & Carol Zayler (2/10).***Birth Announcements:*** Congratulations to Jason & Daven Ritzema who welcomed their second daughter, Holland “Holly” Jayne Ritzema (8lbs 11oz.), on Jan. 12th! She was also welcomed by Big sister Dylan and grandparents, Jim & Patty Ritzema. Congratulations to Kayla & Kyle Gelow for the birth of their daughter Lily Elizabeth born on Jan. 20. She is welcomed by big brother West and grandparents Mark & Trudy Petersen.

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| **Chancel Choir News** |

Special Music Performances for February:

* + February 4: Don Gibbs
  + February 11: Children’s Praise Choir
  + February 18: Chancel Choir
  + February 25: Keith & Jean Hudson
  + **Special Music Volunteers:** If you would like to provide special music, please contact Deb Dieckman or the church office.

**Practices:** at 9:30 on the 2nd and 3rd Sundays of the month. We then sing on the 3rd Sunday. \*If you are high school age or older and like to sing, we would love to have you join us!

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| **PF Youth News** |

Kids 6th grade to 12th are welcome to join the group! For more information on upcoming PF Youth trips, call/text Claude Johnson at 616-894-5595 or email: [claudej2002us@yahoo.com](mailto:claudej2002us@yahoo.com).

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| **Praise Choir News** |

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| **Preschool News** |

Our practices are every Tues. from 4-5pm and we once again invite all children of the church, ages pre-k to fifth, to join our group! We sing the 2nd Sunday of every month! This is a great time for children to make new friends and sing praise to our Savior!

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| **Deacons News** |

* **Meeting:** next meeting is Feb. 13 at 6:30pm.
* **Potluck:** We are sponsoring a Potluck after worship on Feb. 11th along with Women’s Fellowship. Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service.
* **Easter Flowers: are now on sale!** Tulips, Hyacinths, and Daffodils will be available. The Deacons will purchase just a few Easter Lilies for the altar. Flowers will be $10.00 each and orders are due by Sun., Mar. 17th. \*Flowers will be available for pick up at Easter Sunday, on March 31st.
* We always need **volunteers** for Coffee Hour and Children’s Messages. See the sign-up sheets outside the church office under the bulletin board. To keep a good flow during worship, we ask that Children’s Messages be no longer than 4 minutes please.
* **Lent** begins on Wed., Feb. 14th with Pastor Ed as speaker. WF has opened the Silent Breakfast up to all who would like to attend. Please see more information under ‘Women’s Fellowship News’.
* **Church Cancellations:** Remember that if the weather is too dangerous for church to be held, we will inform you through TV 8 & 13, email, and Facebook posts. Pastor Ed and Deacon Chair, Don Gibbs, consult and decide if church should be cancelled. Their decision takes into consideration the SAFETY of our members during inclement weather.

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| **Christian Ed News** |

* **FEBRUARY IS NOISY COIN MONTH!** Please bring any loose change you can spare to church for the 4 Sundays in Feb. Kids will be collecting the coins in bread pans to make noise!
* **Attendance** is still struggling but we love Praise Choir kids who come to Sunday School when they sing! We shorten the lesson, make it fun, and send them off to practice with Candy! You would love to hear their enthusiasm on those days, and it is a major boost to our teachers.
* We have about 6 weeks to go in the Winter Curriculum and will be ordering Spring Curriculum soon. We are looking ahead for the possibility of Vacation Bible School this Summer.

Children are learning all about winter and planning for our Valentines party on Wed., Feb. 14th. The children will be making valentine’s boxes to bring in for the class party and will get to wear pjs and watch a movie!

* **Valentine Dance:** will be on Fri., Feb. 9th at 6pm. Children and Parents are invited to join us for food and lots of dancing!
* **Spring Fundraiser:** the preschoolers are selling a wonderful assortment of flower baskets! Options are ferns, begoinias, geraniums, impatiens, and petunias. Stop by the table in the lobby to place your order. Money is due at time of order. Baskets are $20ea. or 3/$50. Orders are due by Sun., Feb. 25th. Orders will be placed that week and delivered the week of May 6th – just in time for Mother’s Day! So make sure to order for all the special women in your family!

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| **Women’s Fellowship News** |

* **Winslow Circle:**meets Wed., Feb. 7 at 1pm. Please call or see Rosel Eagles for more information.
* **Bethany Circle Members:** will meet Wed., Feb. 7 at 6:30pm. We are starting a new Bible Study called “Acceptance and Gratitude” Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life. If you need a workbook, please see Fran Gibbs. The first night’s title: “Can’t Get No Satisfaction: Fighting Discontent” and the reading is Haggai 1-2.5. Work through the questions for the discussion. There are some good quotes!
* **Endeavor Circle members:** Thank you to all the ladies who came to the first meeting in January! We had a good turnout and a great time! **Next meeting**, which will be our first video session of our study, will be on Mon., Feb. 12th at 7pm in the fellowship hall. For any ladies approximately 20-45 years of age wanting to join, we are having a 6 week study session on the book “Forginvg What You Can’t Forget” by Lysa TerKeurst. If interested come join us Feb. 12th in Fellowship Hall or contact Emily Franklin or Jenny Milam for more information!
* Come join Women’s Fellowship on Wed., Feb. 14, at 10am for the **ANNUAL SILENT BREAKFAST**. Meet Chris in the library and then everyone will proceed to Fellowship Hall for a message from Pastor Ed, a symbolic breakfast of bread and juice and beverages, much like a communion. After the program, Pastor Ed will conduct an imposition of ashes for those interested. This is a beautiful time to begin your mindset, prayer life, and faith journey through the Lenten Season. ALL ARE WELCOME!

***Order Your Easter Flowers Today!***

We invite you to place an order for a 6” Tulip, Hyacinth, or Daffodil in memory of or in honor of a loved one. Once again, this year, the Deacons are offering you a convenient, affordable and mission-centered way to order your flowers through the church office. For the cost of **$10.00 per plant**, you can help support the Deacon’s Discretionary Fund. Orders must be placed **by March 17th .** Simply fill out the form listed below. You may pick up your flowers after the 10:30am service on Easter Sunday, March 31st, or have it delivered to someone on the Friendship list (please indicate below).

*\*Please make checks Payable to:* ***First Congregational Church*** *or* ***FCCoG***

**Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**□ Tulip** (Qty) **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ □ Hyacinth** (Qty) **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ □ Daffodil** (Qty) **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Total number of plants ordered** \_\_\_\_\_ **x $10.00 = $** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE CHECK ONE:**

□ I will pick up my plants □ Please deliver my plant to someone on the Friendship ListA vase of tulips

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**~ February 2024 ~**

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| ***Sun*** | ***Mon*** | ***Tue*** | ***Wed*** | ***Thu*** | ***Fri*** | ***Sat*** |
| **\*Ash Wednesday Activities:**   * **10a WF 64th Silent Breakfast** * **11a Prayer & Imposition of Ashes** * **7p Service & Imposition of Ashes** | | | | **1**  11a GAMA  6p Scouts (all)  7:30 AA | **2** | **3**  10a GS |
| **4  *Communion***  ***& Scout Sunday***  9:30 Sunday School  9:30 Bible Study  10:30 Worship  Special Music –  *Don Gibbs and Cindy Perry*  3p Venture | **5** | **6**  4p Praise Choir | **7**  10a PURLS  1p Winslow  6:30 Bethany | **8**  6p Scouts (all)  7:30 AA | **9**  6p Preschool Valentine Dance | **10**  10a GS |
| **11 *Transfiguration Sunday***  9:30 Choir Practice  9:30 Sunday School  9:30 Bible Study  10:30 Worship  Special Music –  *Praise Choir* | **12**  7p Endeavor | **13**  4p Praise Choir  6:30 Deacons | **14**  **A picture containing old  Description automatically generatedValentines Day**  **10a Silent Bfast & Imp. of Ashes** | **15**  6p Scouts (all)  7:30 AA | **16** | **17**  10a GS |
| **18**  ***1st Sunday of Lent***  9:30 Choir Practice  9:30 Sunday School  9:30 Bible Study  10:30 Worship  Special Music –  *Chancel Choir*  3p Venture | **19**  ***President’s Day*** | **20**  4p Praise Choir | **21**  10a PURLS | **22**  6p Scouts (all)  7:30 AA | **23** | **24**  10a GS |
| **25**  9:30 Sunday School  9:30 Bible Study  10:30 Worship  Special Music –  *Keith & Jean Hudson* | **26**  6:30 Trustees | **27**  4p Praise Choir | **28** | **29** | A picture containing text  Description automatically generated | |

***Calendar Notes:***

**~ March 2024 ~**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Sun*** | ***Mon*** | ***Tue*** | ***Wed*** | ***Thu*** | ***Fri*** | ***Sat*** |
| **MARCH 10TH** | | | | | **1** | **2**  10a Girl Scouts |
| **3 *Communion***  9:30 Sunday School  9:30 Bible Study  10:30 Worship  Special Music –  *TBA*  3p Venture | **4** | **5**  4p Praise Choir | **6**  10a PURLS  1p Winslow  6:30 Bethany | **7**  6p Scouts (all)  7:30 AA | **8** | **9** *Set clocks*  *ahead before*  *you go to bed!*  A clock with flowers and text  Description automatically generated |
| **10 *Daylight***  ***Savings Time Begins & Girl Scout Sunday***  9:30 Choir Practice  9:30 Sunday School  9:30 Bible Study  10:30 Worship  Special Music –  *Praise Choir* | **11** | **12**  4p Praise Choir  6:30 Deacons | **13**  10a PURLS | **14**  6p Scouts (all)  7:30 AA | **15** | **16**  10a GS  12p Scout Pinewood Derby  ***Scout Lock-in*** |
| **17 *St. Patrick’s Day***  9:30 Choir Practice  9:30 Sunday School  9:30 Bible Study  10:30 Worship  Special Music –  *Sandy Cote and Deb Dieckman*  3p Venture | **18**  Easter Flower Orders Due! | **19**  4p Praise Choir | **20**  10a PURLS | **21**  6p Scouts (all)  7:30p AA | **22** | **23**  10a GS |
| **24  *Palm Sunday***  9:30 Sunday School  9:30 Bible Study  10:30 Worship  Special Music –  *Chancel Choir* | **25**  6:30 Trustees | **26** | **27**  10a PURLS | **28**  ***Maundy Thursday***  7:30p AA | **29**  ***Good Friday***  ***Spring Break March 25-29 (all schools)***  Easter Flowers Delivered | **30**  10a Girl Scouts  ***Holy Saturday*** |
| **31 *Easter***  ***Sunday***  9:30 Sunday School  9:30 Bible Study  10:30 Worship  Special Music –  *TBA* | ***Calendar Notes:*** | | | | | |