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Everywhere you look you see it. Everywhere you go you find it. Every newspaper and TV station advertises it. It is on the radio and decorated all over town. Everyone knows that Christmas is coming soon. It doesn’t take much to figure out that something exciting is about to happen. Something amazing is about to take place.

Last month, 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 was 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 acquire these door buster bargains. There was 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 be worth the wait.

Just as Lent prepares us for Easter, Advent has prepared 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.

Before that special day arrives, let us pause and reflect on what Christmas really means to us. We need remind ourselves to look at this Christmas with eyes that see the hope, peace, joy and love that Jesus brings to us and to this world. As we each celebrate this day in our own ways and with our own traditions, let us all take a moment and reflect on the many ways our lives have been blessed by the wonderful gift of Jesus Christ. There is no more precious gift then the gift of Jesus.

As the excitement grows toward that wonderful Christmas morning, the expectation of something great grows as well. We have made all the needed preparations, and we are hopeful that our efforts are met with joy. We wait to see the looks on the faces of those we love as we anticipate the great feelings and wonderful memories that will be created. We are hopeful that everyone is filled with happiness.

We also 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 Christmas Day with high expectation that our Christmas celebrations are not just about gifts and goodies but about the great gift of love that was given to this world in the birth of Jesus. This Christmas, we all must 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 many Christmas events, we are part of, how differently would we live our lives? Would we act with the same sense of urgency when it comes to the sharing the message of Christ as we do when we share a holiday Facebook post?

In Mark 13:24-37, Jesus speaks of his second coming. Jesus tells his disciples that they need to 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 Christmas 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, 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 return today would you be ready? Would the people you love be ready? If you have any doubt, then there is no better time than now to begin the journey. We are here for you. Making sure we are ready for the second coming of Jesus will help us to truly appreciate His first coming at Christmas. Preparing for Jesus is different than preparing for a Christmas party. Jesus is for a lifetime. May God bless you as you seek Him this Christmas.

In Christ, Pastor Ed

***A Message from our Pastor…”Preparing for Jesus at Christmas”***

FCC PILGRIM PULSE

**January 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* | *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*
* *Catrina Walton (friend of Scott Horn) for pancreatic cancer treatment*
* *Coleen Venema (recovery from recent surgery)*
* *Patty Ritzema (recovery from recent surgery)*
* *Helen Appleman at Blodgett (mother of Judi Snyder)*
* *Stephanie Clark (ongoing healing for her eyes and recovery from a recent surgery)*
 |

***\*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:** Scott Horn and Duane Putnam

**Deacon of the Month:** Jane Truesdell

**BOARD MEETINGS:**

Deacons: *NO MEETING*

Trustees: Mon., Jan. 22nd at 6:30pm.

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| **Pastoral News** |

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| **Church Office News** |

**~ FCC News And Announcements ~**

* **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 around 10:30am Christmas Day!
* **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** will meet every Sunday at 9:30am beginning Jan. 7, 2024. Nursery service and coffee is available.

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| **Advent Season News** |

Don’t forget to join us 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 Wed., Dec. 27th from 9am to noon.

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| **Stewardship News** |

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

If you have not done so, please make sure to turn in your tithing cards to the church office, as we still look forward to your continued support! \*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 cards are also available in the Narthex if you would like one.

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 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.

****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!

**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.

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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.

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| **PF Youth News**  |

***Happy Birthday!*** To Pastor Ed (1/5), Pat Toth (1/8 – birthday cards would be greatly appreciated!), Roger Zayler (1/16), Lynne Rowland (1/18), Carol Zayler (1/22), Anita Putnam (1/24), Cheryl Flashaar (1/26), Kirk Faber (1/29), and Jeff Skinner (1/31).

Special Music Performances for January:

* + January 7: Larry Snow
	+ January 14: Children’s Praise Choir
	+ January 21: Chancel Choir
	+ January 28: Deb Dieckman
	+ **Special Music Volunteers:** If you would like to provide special music, please contact Deb Dieckman or the church office.
	+ **Practices:** Adult Choir practices at 9:30 on Jan. 14 and sings on Jan. 21. Come join us if you like to sing! The pattern moving forward is to practice on the 2nd and 3rd Sundays; sing on the 3rd Sunday through Feb.

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| **Praise Choir News** |

Our practices will resume Tues., Jan. 2, 2024. We will practice from 4-5pm and we once again invite all children of the church, ages pre-k to fifth, to join our group! We then sing the 2nd Sunday of every month!

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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.

**Angel Tree 2023:** Thank You for the amazing participation of our Angel Tree Project this year. The students had a simple Christmas Party with punch and cookies and then they received your gifts! Their teacher said, “this is the first time I have seen you smile like that!” One girl opened her t-shirt and started to cry in disbelief! After another opened a sketch pad, and he was beyond excited, showing us pictures drawn on notebook paper that can now go into a ‘real’ sketchpad. So many of you were so generous that the Deacons were able to give each child personal hygiene items, clothing, gift cards, and other items they asked for. Because of you, these teens were shown that someone really cares for them!



* **Christmas Poinsettias**: Thank You for participating in the Poinsettia Project. Over 100 plants will adorn the altar for our Christmas Eve Services. You may pick up your plants after the11pm service or on Wed., Dec. 27 between 9am and Noon. You may pick up your plants after the 11pm service on Christmas Eve or Wed., Dec. 27 between 9am and Noon.
* **New Year’s Eve Sunday Service:** There WILL BE church on Sun., Dec. 31 at 10:30am. Please come to start your New Year right!
* **New Coffee Service instructions** are in the kitchen. We are now using a 55-cup coffee maker, so we don’t run out of coffee. We can always use help so please sign up outside the office.

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| **Christian Ed News** |

**Sunday School Classes:** We thank all our Christian Ed staff who teach our most precious kids throughout the school year. They work hard to provide informational and fun lessons to our kids. Please support Sunday School by having your kids attend at 9:30am on January 7.

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| **Deacons News** |

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| **Preschool News** |

* **Children’s Message Volunteers:** Please sign up outside the office. We ask that you keep your message to no more than 4 minutes so the service can flow smoothly. Thanks.

Our children are now on break and classes will resume Wed., Jan. 3, 2024.

* Mother’s Day Baskets: this year the preschoolers will be selling baskets for Mother’s day as their spring fundraiser! Please watch your newsletters and bulletins for more information to come soon!

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| **Women’s Fellowship News** |

* **Circle Members:**There are no Bethany or Winslow Circle meetings in January but on January 15 at 7pm. Bethany and Winslow Circles resume meeting on Wed., Feb. 7th (at 1pm fo Winslow and 6:30pm for Bethany).
* **Board Meeting:** A Women’s Fellowship Board Meeting will be held in January. \*Date to be announced.
* **NEW “Endeavor Circle”:** Coming Jan. 15, 2024 at 7pm here at the church, there will be a new opportunity for FCCOG and all ladies in the approximate age group of 20-45 years old! The goal of this group is to bring us ladies together to work on the path of saying YES TO GOD, but to also give us a group to fellowship with one another. We don’t have all the specifics yet of how this group looks, but we have the heart and desire to serve our community. To provide times where the details of home can be set aside till later, and for the opportunity to dive into a Bible Study as well as have times for a ladies night out. If this is something that you are desiring come talk to us! Our first meeting will consist of us getting to know one another and to also plan how we as a group would like to move forward on growing in our faith and relationship with God, and our families. Leaders are Emily Franklin and Jenny Milam.
* **Terri Lynn Nuts:** a few items are still available. Please contact Chris Hubbard at 616-754-7464. to purchase any remaining items.
* **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:** We had a small group working VERY HARD to give those who attend church on Christmas Eve a very special handmade keepsake. They ask that you take one per family so that every family in attendance gets one.
* Mark your calendars now for the **Silent Breakfast** on Wed., Feb. 14th at 10am. This event is open to everyone and includes a symbolic communion breakfast, a message, and a time for personal reflection as we enter Lent.

**~ 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 PURLSPreschool Resumes | **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**6p Scout Lock-in | **13** |
| **14**9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *Praise Choir* | **15*****MLK Day***7p Endeavor Circle Group Meets! | **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:***

**~ February 2024 ~**

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| ***Sun*** | ***Mon*** | ***Tue*** | ***Wed*** | ***Thu*** | ***Fri*** | ***Sat*** |
| ***\*We will collect coins for Noisy Coin throughout the month! Please bring in your loose change to help fight hunger in our community!*** | **1**11a GAMA4:30 Scouts (all)7:30 AA | **2** | **3** |
| **4 *Communion*** ***& Scout Sunday***9:30 Choir Practice9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *TBA*3p Venture | **5** | **6**4p Praise Choir | **7**10a PURLS1p Winslow6:30 Bethany | **8**4:30 Scouts (all)7:30 AA | **9** | **10** |
| **11 *Transfiguration Sunday***9:30 Choir Practice9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *Praise Choir* | **12** | **13**4p Praise Choir | **14****A picture containing old  Description automatically generatedValentines Day****10a Silent Bfast & Imp. of Ashes** | **15**4:30 Scouts (all)7:30 AA | **16**6p Preschool Valentine Dance | **17** |
| **18*****1st Sunday of Lent***9:30 Choir Practice9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 WorshipSpecial Music – *Chancel Choir*12p PF Youth Mtg3p Venture | **19*****President’s Day*****Easter Flower Orders are DUE!** | **20**4p Praise Choir | **21**10a PURLS | **22**4:30 Scouts (all)7:30 AA | **23** | **24** |
| **25**9:30 Choir Practice9:30 Sunday School9:30 Bible Study10:30 Worship Special Music – *TBA* | **26**6:30 Trustees | **27**4p Praise Choir | **28** | **29** |  |

**~ Christmas Poinsettias 2023 ~**

Melissa R. Andrews In Memory of Carrol Minard

Karen Aylsworth In Memory of Jackie Aylsworth

 In memory of Hazel Purdy

Patty Barber In Memory of Ted Barber

 In Memory of Kenneth & Ethel Wilson

 In Memory of Don & Bea Barber

 In Memory of Dean & Edith Wiesen

Bruce & Sue Beauvais In Memory of Carl & Evelyn Berg

 In Memory of Bob & Ruth Beauvais

 In Honor of Lynn Zilch

Viginia Berg In Memory of Charles O. Berg

 In Memory of Ida & Sophus Hansen

Bonnie Braman In Memory of Russell & Alice Braman and Fred & Kathryn Boyd

 In Memory of Hal Braman

 In Honor of J.R., Jamie, Sarah, Andrew, Sarah, Ellie, Alanah, & Sophia

Bart Brown In Memory of Marilyn Brown nee Fries

 In Memory of Prudence Bower Tower

Larry & Karen Carbonelli In Memory of Kevin Carbonelli

 In Memory of Elisa Nelson

 In Memory of Doug Shaw

 In Memory of Muriel Carbonelli

 In Memory of Bob & Elizabeth Waldo

Jack & Ann Corner In Memory of Bill & Kathleen Briggs

 In Memory of Tom & Frances Corner

 In Honor of Sons, Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren

Rich & Trudi Cunningham In Memory of Jack & Sharla McCoy

 In Memory of Linda Cunningham

Carla Durdle In Memory of Michael Durdle (husband)

 In Memory of Max & Barbara Durdle (In-laws)

 In Memory of William & Joan Thompson (parents)

 In Honor of Children: Scott & Marianne Durdle and Chad & Tracy Durdle

 In Honor of Grandkids (8)

 In Honor of Greatgrandchildren (4)

Rosel & Dan Eagles In Memory of Dave & Dotti Rackliffe

 In Memory of Jess & Merle Eagles

 In Memory of Lana & Willi Huck

 In Honor of Stephanie

 In Honor of Eric

Virginia Evans In Memory of Marvin Evans

Marilyn Ferguson In Memory of Roy Ferguson

 In Memory Julie Ferguson

Patrice Fulton-Peacock In Honor of Elise & Ellia Devitt

 In Honor of Eli & Grant Kuenzer

 In Honor of Juno Peacock

Fran & Don Gibbs In Memory of Bill & Phylis Ham

 In Memory of Donald Sr. & Shirley Gibbs

 In Honor of Our 3 Children and 8 Grandchildren

 In Honor of Our Church

Judy Graham In Memory of my loving husband, Dale Graham

 In Memory of H.D. & Bettye Graham

 In Memory of Bob & Ann Snyder

William & Peggy Ham In Memory of William & Phyllis Ham

 In Honor of Don & Fran Gibbs

Cindy Hanson In Memory of David Hanson

 In Memory of Jerry Haverdink

Scott Horn In Memory of Sue & Jim Briggs

 In Memory of Ed Horn

 In Memory of Dave & Dotti Rackliff

Karen Hulbert In Memory of David Hulbert

 In Memory of Richard Canfield

 In Memory of Kathy Cristofoli

Claude Johnson In Memory of Clarence & Gwendolyn Y. Johnson, parents

 In Memory of Great Grandparents, Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles

 In Memory of Clarence H. Johnson (brother) and & Gwendolyn C. Waymer (sister)

 In Honor of My Children, Grandchildren & Great-grandchildren

 In Honor of Local, State, and National Pilgrim Fellowship Youth

Rev. Jerry & Marilyn Jones In Memory of Deb Kazmierczak

 In Honor of Our Children and Grandchildren

 In Honor of Our Faith Family

Ronald Kingsbury In Memory of my loving wife, Dixie Kingsbury

 In Honor of Debbie

 In Honor of Lisa

Michele Kocher In Memory of Jacquelyn & Lynn Kocher

 IN Honor of Nate, Kyle, Mike, & Rylie

 In Honor of Women’s Fellowship

Pam & Jim Koski In Memory of Pam’s parents: Ray & Ardella Payton

 In Memory of Jim’s parents: Henry & Charlotte Koski

Marta Lores In Memory of Marjorie Lores

Carol Magoon In Memory of my husband Ray Magoon

 In Memory of Chelsea Magoon

 In Memory of Trudi Magoon

 In Memory of Christina Magoon

Gerald & Gloria McPherson In Memory of Burt & Julie McPherson

 In Memory of Jay & Elouise Olsen

 In Memory of Our Children and Grandchildren

Don & Julie Momber In Memory of Dalyn & Nancy Ling and David Ling

 In Memory of June Momber

 In Honor of Our Grandchildren: Christian, Raegan, Ada, Logan, and Ames

Darlene Petersen In Memory of Gary Petersen

 In Memory of Darwin (Buzz) Petersen

Duane & Anita Putnam In Memory of Grandson Levi

 In Honor of Ivan (Duane’s Dad)

Roxy Rice In Honor of Israel and the IDF

Kenneth & Coleen Venema In Memory of Herman & Betty Venema (Ken’s parents)

 In Memory of Rex & Marion Braginton (Coleen’s parents)

 In Honor of Kevin and Carrie Maria

 In Honor of Morgan Maria, Benjamin, and Rex

Lynn & Bonnie Wickerham In Memory of Joe & Ruth Wickerham and Waldo & Marguerite Fisher

 In Honor of Brent, Karen, & Brett Wickerham, Lannie Fisher, and Denise Webb

 In Honor of Nicholas, Blake, Colleen, and Holden Wickerham

 In Honor of Our Lord and Savior & Church Family

Bud & Carol Zayler In Memory of Irving & Bernice Lohr

 In Memory of Irene Zayler



**Thank you and Christmas Blessings to all!**