

THE MESSENGER

NEWSLETTER FOURTH QUARTER 2025

First Congregational Church UCC
412 4th Street Manistee Mi



From The Pastor

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest" - Isaiah 9:2-3

Dear Friends,

As some of you were setting up for our annual Bazaar, in a pile of papers bound for the recycling bin someone had placed a "Liturgical Year" colored calendar. It got me to thinking about the ways we mark the different church seasons throughout the year. It was, more than anything else, a good reminder to explore the history and traditions around color, season changes, and culture of worship in our church experience. Although as I write this it is only the last week of October, Christmas planning is already underway, which means I and many others here at church are thinking about and planning the seasons of Advent and Epiphany. These are times of the year where white and yellow and gold are seen in symbols surrounding us. Candles and stars, a glowing manger, a gift of gold from a wise person: light colors are used to illuminate the important parts of the stories we hear. We are not alone in our focus, many other traditions use this time of year to bring a focus on "light". Our Jewish brothers and sisters celebrate Hanukkah, a celebration of light. Pagans honor the solstice, the darkest night, and a calling back of the light. Buddhists celebrate Bodhi Day or, the day of Enlightenment. During Diwali, Hindus light fireworks to honor the defeat of light over dark.

We're not alone in our search for light. Isaiah reminds us that light will shine on the darkness. It will be illuminated and we will see that which has been hiding. As we enter a new calendar year we are given an opportunity to look at ourselves and bring some light to our lives. It is an opportunity for deep reflection. While many people make New Year's Resolutions, perhaps we can call it New Year's Illumination. What parts of ourselves have we been placing in the shadows? What experiences, gifts, or yearnings have we been ignoring or downplaying? How can we illuminate the shadowy parts of our lives and honor them?

This is the gift of the seasons of Advent and Epiphany. Welcome the light. Allow it to change you.

May the coming seasons be a seasons filled with unexpected blessings and light,
Pastor Liz

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

November 3- Josey Myers
November 4- Stephanie Persennaire
November 6- Eddie Huizinga
November 8- Ryan Tabaczka
November 9 -Dottie Peterson
November 10- Erik Wachlin
- Kirk Myers
November 12- Grace Huizinga
November 13- Jacob Mogan
November 15- Sandy Turk
November 18- Logan Patrick
November 22- Sue Froyland
November 27- Bob Carlson
November 28- Scott Warsen

November Coffee Hour Hosts

November 2- Bazaar Goodies
November 9- Gladys & Shar
November 16- Deboni
November 23- The Masons
November 30- Volunteer
Needed

November Sunday School

November 2 - Sandy and John
November 9- Kate T
November 16- Deboni
November 23- Kristine
November 30- Family Book Club
with Pastor Liz

*Please Consider Signing up
as Greeters, Coffee Hour
Hosts, Sunday School
Teachers or Liturgists.
Sign up sheets are located
in the hallway next outside
of the small dining room.*

Fellowship Report

The Fellowship team has been pleased to see how many have been hosting coffee hour and how many are joining everybody also. There have been several new people so please reach out to them and make them feel welcome. You don't need to put out a huge spread, coffee cookies or donut holes some fruit if you want. It is for fellowship. Thank you.

-Mary and Stu

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

November 11- Marvin and Linda Chick
November 18- Roger and Sally Zielinski



We will be taking on new members on November 16th. If you would like become a member please talk to Pastor Liz

November Greeters

November 2- Kristen
November 9- Volunteer Needed
November 16- Volunteer Needed
November 23- Volunteer Needed
November 30- Volunteer Needed

November Liturgist

November 2- Denci
November 9- John Gumper
November 16 - Jane Lippert
November 23- Volunteer
Needed
November 30- Volunteer
Needed

Moderator's Musings

We had an absolutely beautiful autumn that enabled us all to get out and enjoy the natural beauty that our community and our area has to offer. As I gaze in awe at the trees that appear to change to blazing colors virtually overnight, I am constantly reminded that nature is God's way of showing wisdom and love for us all.

We have been so fortunate to have members of the congregation willing to step up and provide worship leadership on the second Sunday of each month while Pastor Liz takes a well-deserved break. Their messages help us all learn more about them and their background, but they also help us each to learn more about ourselves and how we relate to the world around us. I am looking forward to future messages from our lay congregation members.

We are welcoming new faces to almost every Sunday worship service and many are choosing to come back and become part of our active, open, and affirming congregation. I am so proud of how we all make an effort to reach out and welcome visitors during the passing of the peace in the sanctuary and around the tables in fellowship hall sharing a cup of coffee and a treat.

By the time you are reading this the 2025 Holiday Bazaar will be over and, based on my observation of the preparations, this year should prove to be the biggest and best yet! The busy workers in "Chere's Sweat Shop" as our craft group calls themselves, have outdone themselves producing beautiful items that will end up decorating holiday tables, Christmas trees, and stockings hung by the chimney with care. As we prepare to gather around the table to offer thanks for our many blessings and then move into the glorious Advent season I hope everyone is looking forward to a positive end to 2025 and to the promise of everything better in 2026!

-John Helge

Supporting Each Other

Our church community loves to support each other, (young and old) as they participate in sports, plays, concerts and other community events. If you are doing something in the community or your kids have an event please email Pastor Liz or Deb with the information and we will get it into the weekly bulletin. As a reminder information for the weekly bulletin should be sent in my Wednesday at noon. Information for the weekly emails needs to be received by Thursday morning. Please watch the bulletins for newsletter deadlines.

Monthly Mission

November 1: Heritage Bazaar November 2: Bakers, Bake Sale helpers, Table attendants, Soup helpers

November 15: Maker's Market: Helpers

Continue Making Fall cards for our friends at Maple Ridge, Green Acres, and Manistee Medical Care Facility



Stewardship

As you may have heard in recent services, November is Stewardship Month at First Congregational Church. This is a time to focus on how we use the gifts we've been given to provide support to our congregation.

The first thing I want to say here is Thank You!! Last year, we brought to the Congregation the news that our budget for previous years did not support a full-time pastor without borrowing from our endowment at an unsustainable rate. Pastor Liz suggested she move to part time to bring the budget into balance. We also asked the Congregation to consider increasing their giving if they were able. The result was a 17% increase in pledged income and a budget that would allow us to pay back a third of the previous year's borrowing from the endowment fund. As of the end of October, we are right on target with our giving to fulfill the budget. So, thank you all so very much for your commitments and continuing support.

So, what do we have to look forward to now? Have we accomplished all of our goals? Well, not really. If you look at the financials in our weekly bulletins, you'll find that our total giving is greater than our pledged income. This is great but is also expected-we budget assuming that more money will be given than pledged, as that is the norm for our Congregation. As noted above, overall, we are right on budget. At this rate, we will also pay back the endowment in two more years for the money we took out in 2024. Could we do more? There are signs that we could. Our church attendance and church family are growing this year, indicating there may be more people taking active roles in our Congregation. Additionally, this may be a year when some of our families have found their means increasing. God continues to show us love and care in many ways, including in this Congregation.

As I've stated before, I don't know what anyone in the church gives to the church. That is between you and God, but I encourage you to consider the ideas Pastor Liz is presenting this month and, as we approach November 23 rd , make a pledge of support to this Congregation to continue the work we do. And again, Thank you!

John Gumper

For Church Records Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

I am ☐ A Member ☐ An Associate Member
☐ A Spiritual Seeker ☐ A Community Supporter

I plan to give \$ _____ each ☐ week ☐ month

Beginning _____ Annual Total \$ _____

I understand that this commitment can be changed at any time by giving notice to the appropriate church officer

 Signed _____ Date _____

 *For Your Records*

Date _____

Along with the others in this community of faith I pledge to give as I am able, for the ministries of the church

I plan to give \$ _____

Beginning _____

Each ☐ Week ☐ Month

Annual Total \$ _____

Ministry Report

I read a joke that said that the months of June, July, and August are like the “el-em-en-o- pee” of summer! I'm not sure what you we would call the months of October, November, and December, but they are ones that generally have more events on the calendar! Here is some of what is on our church calendar.

The Stewardship Campaign will follow Sanctified Art materials in a series entitled “Our Money Story.” We will offer Communion Oct. 26, with part one of the series (and will not serve it on Nov. 2). When we finish the stewardship series on Nov. 23, we will again have Communion.

The Hanging of the Greens will be on Nov. 23. It takes about an hour after church, and the more hands helping, the better. There are helpful things that the children can do as well.

Advent begins on Nov. 30. On the 28th, we will celebrate the birth of Jesus with a Christmas carol sing during worship. Our theme will be “What do you fear?” . An Advent Devotional booklet (or e-book) will be available for free (or \$5.00 donation to offset printing). The Advent season comes to a close when we celebrate Epiphany on January 4. That is when we will receive our Star Words for the new year.

Watch the weekly email blast and upcoming bulletins for details about the Christmas Eve service.

Finally, we wish to reiterate how grateful we are that many in our congregation have volunteered to fill the pulpit on the second Sunday of the month during 2024, since Pastor Liz transitioned to a part time position with us. She has worked hard with anyone who has taken the opportunity to share from the pulpit by providing ideas and resources. It is time to begin asking people to come forward and share again next year. Please consider signing up for one of the following dates representing the first quarter of the new year: Jan. 11, Feb. 8, Mar. 8, April 12.

You will not be alone in this endeavor!

Thank you!

Nanci Swenson and Joanne Cotugno



Christmas Eve Cantata Rehearsal Schedule

Wednesdays at 7:00pm! All are welcome please talk to Sarah Helge if you have any questions!

Let's help make Christmas Eve a beautiful, meaningful thing!



Join us after worship on November 23rd to Hang the Greens! Our Sanctuary is always so beautiful for the Advent and Christmas Season.

Craft Group Update

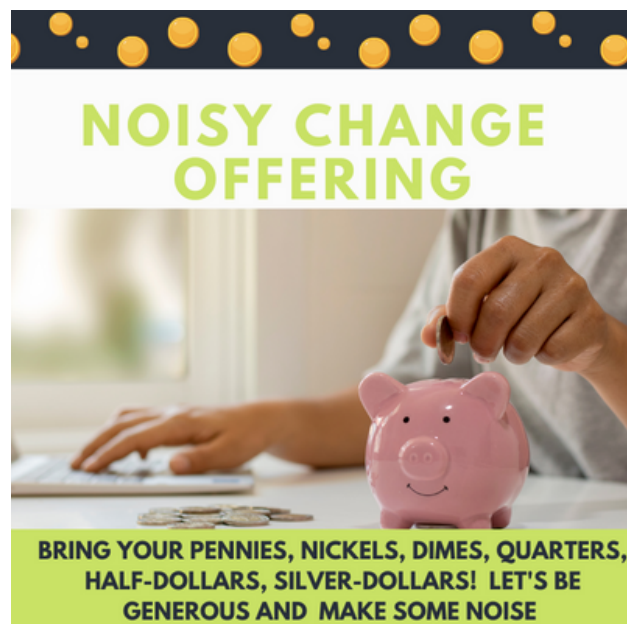
We are setting up for the Bazaar today as I am writing this. A big thank you for all who have helped! People have shown up on Wednesdays. Others have donated fabric, batting and thread. And still other have donate auction items. People who walked in the door have commented on how nice and clean the entry looks! We are so grateful, to those who have signed up to work on the event too. There is always something to be done, even if you don't feel "crafty". Join us next year!

Sunday School

Sunday School happens after worship and during coffee hour. The lessons and supplies will be provided for you.

There is a sign up sheet in the hallway outside of the small dining room, right next to the signups for greeters, liturgists and coffee hour hosts. You can sign up for one Sunday at a time. If you have questions please talk to Pastor Liz or our coordinator Kate Thomson. We would love to have you participate in this very special program.

UCCMANISTEE.ORG



We will be having a Noisy Change Offering on November 30th. But because of Advent starting we will not have a fifth Sunday Hymn Sing in November! (We will have a Christmas Carol Sing on December 28th)



Come and do some holiday shopping, and **support local artists** and makers, at our Makers Market. Manistee's own **Detroit Coney Cart** will be here! Grab some lunch, and do some shopping! There will be hand sewn items, cards, clothing, jewelry, and so much more!



We still have a limited number of vendor spots available. Please contact Pastor Liz or Chere if you or someone you know is interested!

Christmas 6 ½ “ Poinsettia Order Form

Quantity	Cost: 1 = \$12.00
Red _____	2 = \$24.00
White _____	PAID \$_____

Purchased by: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Memory of: _____

☐ I will take my plant home following the Christmas Eve Service.

☐ Please deliver my plant to a homebound person.

Make your check payable to: First Congregational Church

Mark your envelope/check “Poinsettia” and place this form with payment in the offering plate. Or drop payment off at the office with Deb.

Order Deadline is Monday November 17th.



*Coming up:
November 19th
(Please note 3rd
Wednesday this
month)
Their Eyes
Were Watching God
By: Zora Neale Hurston*

*No Banned Book Club
in December*

**LAST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH
AT 7:00PM:**

Banned Book Club

**JOIN US EACH MONTH FOR COMMUNITY AND CONVERSATION
AS WE EXPLORE STORIES.**

Manistee First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
412 4th Street
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