



Congregational Courier

THOUGHTS FROM DARCY CRAIN SENIOR MINISTER

Dear Friends:

I was reading one of my daily devotionals from a pastor hero of mine and she shared a Chinese parable that I think is perfect for heading into the holiday season and new year. It's about a water carrier that carried two large jars of water across a shoulder yoke on the long path to his master's house. One day the cracked jar spoke to the water carrier. (*Yes, you read that right, the cracked jar is speaking. Hey, we have a Bible story where the donkey speaks, angels speak, and so does a burning bush so a talking cracked jar shouldn't be completely out of the realm of possibility for us*). In any case, the cracked jar said:



"I feel so guilty I leak water every day, and I fail to do my job properly. Why don't you replace me with a better jar?"

The water carrier smiled kindly and said, "Tomorrow, as we walk back from the stream, look at the ground along your side of the path."

The next day, the cracked jar noticed something remarkable. Along its side of the path, flowers were blooming—bright, beautiful flowers that were absent on the other side. The water carrier said, "I have always known about your crack. I planted seeds along your side of the path, and each day, as you leaked water, you helped these flowers grow. Without you, this beauty would not exist."

This is one wise water carrier and one guilt ridden cracked jar. In this parable I see echoes of the psalmist in Psalm 138.8 "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands."

We are quick to forsake our work, our dreams, and ourselves because in some way we are all like that cracked jar. Imperfect. We all hope to accomplish more than we can. We often compare ourselves to others and walk away feeling we aren't enough. As we head into the Christmas season when sometimes it seems like everyone else's jar is sealed and on point and ours is a duct taped wreck,



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Whatever Your Story, You're Welcome Here



remember this parable. Remember the Psalm. God will fulfill purposes beyond our recognition, and do beautiful things with the cracked vessels we are. We are to trust that God does not demand perfection. In fact, it is through our cracks that beauty beyond our planning takes root. May the beauty you plant this Christmas and New Year remind you to not forsake yourself or your efforts, for the enduring love of God will be born among us once again.

Darcy

Rev. Dr. Darcy Crain
Senior Minister

*Perfectly
Imperfect*

**Article inspired by Rev. Cameron Tribble's reflection on Amos 5:24. Published November 21, 2024 in her newsletter, Piloting Faith.*

**FCC MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH
NEW YOUTH PROGRAMMING 2024-2025**

Our new youth programming for 2024-2025! More details to come, but here are the basics:

- Our amazing Christine Martínez will continue to offer **Sunday morning** classes for Middle School Youth in the Meeting Room during 10:00 a.m. worship.
- Confirmation begins and will gather approximately every other Tuesday night from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
- On most **fourth Wednesdays** from 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., we will have dinner and programming for both Middle & High School youth at FCC. We'll begin with eating dinner together as a group, then middle school and high school will split into separate groups for discussion and programming.
- Each month we will also offer a service opportunity for our High School Youth.

*Save
the
Date*

Upcoming Middle (MS) & High School (HS) Youth Events

Mark your calendars - more info to come!

Sun, Dec 15	11:00 a.m.	Advent Afternoon of Fun (See page 13)
Tue, Dec 24	5:30 p.m.	Christmas Pageant (See page 14)
Sun, Jan 5	11:00 a.m.	All-church Undecorating Party (See page 14)
Sat, Feb 1 - Sun, Feb 2		Youth Retreat in Detroit (Grades 6 - 12)



LILY TINKER FORTEL
ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Happy Advent, Dear FCC!

I hope this season of reflection and anticipation will be meaningful for each of you. As we anticipate the hope, joy, peace, and love of Christmas, I find myself reflecting on how grateful Steve and I are for our beloved FCC community.



Thank you for the outpouring of love you have offered us over the past many months as we prepare to welcome our baby to the world! We are grateful to all who showered us with support, love, and gifts at the baby shower in October and in the weeks since. With each joyful well-wish and each act of loving support, you have reinforced the power and importance of loving community. Thank you again.

My prayer this Advent is that all will find hope, joy, peace and love, and that FCC will continue to be a beacon of loving community in our world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lily'.

Rev. Lily Tinker Fortel
Associate Minister



Christmas Eve at FCC has been richly blessed with traditions that have stood the test of time. Our church family gathers on this holy night to pray and ponder, to worship and sing out joyfully, and to feel the magic of the Spirit of Christmas that lives in all of our hearts, as, together, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Please check out the details on page 14 for these much anticipated events that, every year, remind us that the reason for the season is the light brought by the Christ child to us, on this most holy night.



ERIC HAUSMAN
ADJUNCT MINISTER

As we march into the holidays and then into the New Year, we have the opportunity for much celebration. However, if your life is anything like mine, there will also be the opportunity for stress and anxiety along the way. Whether at a Christmas party or planning goals for the upcoming year, anxiety often feels like an unwelcome guest in our lives. It can barge right into the party and threaten to unravel our sense of peace and enjoyment in life. As people of faith seeking to live with intention and care, it can be helpful to reflect on the roots of our anxiety and how we might transform it into something life giving.



In Matthew 6:25, Jesus speaks about anxiety with gentle yet profound clarity. He tells his followers, “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear.” The Greek word used here for worry is *merimna*, which can be translated as “care” or “concern.” It is also the Greek word for “worry” and “anxiety.” The literal etymology of the word is “mind divided” and can convey a sense of being pulled in different directions or divided within oneself.

When *merimna* takes root in us, it can feel as though we are stretched thin, consumed by competing fears about the future or pressures from the present. This fragmented state can leave us feeling disconnected— from our inner peace, from others, and from the Divine. Yet, Jesus does not reject the idea of caring altogether. After all, care is at the heart of love. The issue lies not in our desire to be concerned, but in letting that care overwhelm or divide us.

So how might we reconcile the tension between our anxieties and our capacity to care? One way is to center our *merimnan* love. The kind of care that reflects God’s wisdom is not one of frantic worry but of rooted attention. It is the kind of care that notices the lilies of the field, and the birds of the air, recognizing their beauty, and trusting in the abundant provision of creation.

As a community, we are called to hold each other in this kind of care. We acknowledge that anxiety is a natural part of life, yet we gently remind one another not to let it steer the ship. Instead, we guide our concerns into meaningful action, knowing we cannot control all outcomes but can choose how to live faithfully in the present.

In our world today, there is so much to be anxious about. But, at the same time, there is so much to care about. May we live out our lives of faith, finding the balance to care about people and the world that can make a real impact in the lives of others. May we show this love and care in our words, as well as in our actions. May we learn together to do this without giving into the temptation to feel overwhelmed in anxiety. As we reflect on where *merimna* shows up in our lives, may we be reminded of what we truly care about. Are there ways in which our concerns divide or cause us to lose sight of love? What would it look like to transform those concerns into a deeper, steadier care—for yourself, for others, and for the world?



Let us walk together, seeking peace that sustains, and care that connects.

In faith and gratitude,
Rev. Eric

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS
AN OUTREACH MINISTRY OF FCC
NANCY SAUVE, CONGREGATION LIAISON



The Circle of Friends serves to support our members and friends of the congregation that are homebound or in care facilities. We are grateful for the leadership of Marilyn McCallum and Marta Skiba for matching volunteers with Circle Friends and for the tireless efforts of Gail Haynes for coordinating members to take the Sunday flowers to our Circle Friends. At present we have 15 volunteers visiting and bringing flowers to 17 of our Circle Friends. We are also working toward coordinating meals for those who could use the short term support.

Please contact Nancy Sauve at nancy@fccannarbor.org if care is needed, if you would like to be a part of this ministry, if you have any questions, or if you know someone who could benefit from having a friend.

Thank you so much!



Here to help

FCC FOOD PANTRY
ROBBIE SAWITSKI, FCC MEMBER

A food bank volunteer put together a thoughtful list of items needed, some suggestions, and some things they learned from those in need:

- Everyone donates Kraft Mac and Cheese in the box. They can rarely use it because it needs milk and butter which is hard to get from regular food banks.
- Boxed milk is a treasure, as kids need it for cereal, which is a frequently donated item.
- Everyone donates pasta sauce and spaghetti noodles.
- They cannot eat all the canned veggies and soup unless you put a can opener in too, or buy pop tops.
- Oil is a luxury but needed for Rice a-Roni, which is also a frequently donated item.
- Spices or salt and pepper would be a real Christmas gift.
- Tea bags and coffee make them feel like you care.
- Sugar and flour are treats.
- They fawn over fresh produce donated by farmers and grocery stores.
- Seeds are cool in Spring and Summer because growing can be easy for some.
- They rarely get fresh meat.
- Tuna and crackers make a good lunch.
- Hamburger Helper goes nowhere without ground beef.
- They get lots of peanut butter and jelly but usually not sandwich bread.
- Butter or margarine is nice, too.
- Eggs are a real commodity.
- Cake mix and frosting makes it possible to make a child's birthday cake.
- Dishwashing detergent is very expensive, and not frequently donated.
- Feminine hygiene products are a luxury, and women will cry over that.
- Everyone loves Stove Top Stuffing.



**ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS
AT FCC**

- 
- December 5 6:00 p.m. AWE - Advent Women's Evening
- December 8 11:00 a.m. JFS Micro Market
- December 13 7:00 p.m. An Organist's Christmas
- December 15 10:00 a.m. Special Music Presentation
(Chancel Choir and Orchestra)
- 11:00 a.m. Advent Afternoon of Fun
- December 20 7:00 p.m. Classical Bells Christmas Concert
- December 22 7:00 p.m. COP Special Christmas Music
- 11:00 a.m. Pageant Rehearsal for Lead Roles
- December 24 4:00 p.m. Live Nativity (until 8:00 p.m.)
- 5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Pageant/Family-Friendly Service
- 8:00 p.m. Candlelight/Communion Service
- December 29 10:00 a.m. Traditional Worship Service with Hymn Sing
- January 5 11:00 a.m. All-Church Un-Decorating Party with lunch

For details on these events, please see pages 12 - 14.

~You can see all FCC Events at fccannarbor.org/calendar ~



Christmas Eve Help Needed

Christmas Eve is fast approaching, bringing with it our beautiful Christmas Pageant and Candlelight Communion service. We need seven volunteers to help with cleanup after the Pageant, to ensure a smooth transition between services.

If you can lend a hand, please contact the office to sign up. We greatly appreciate your assistance, as we celebrate this special time of year.

Thank you for your support and willingness to serve!



FCC CORE VALUES STORIES

If you count our four-legged friends, FCC had 20 CROP Walkers the **Ann Arbor Crop Walk** on Sunday, October 6. Thanks to this fantastic crew and many more from FCC who donated to our team. Your charitable spirit shines through as we seek to support our neighbors and fellow citizens with your caring gifts. We're grateful for the local and global work CROP Walk and Church World Service do to end hunger!

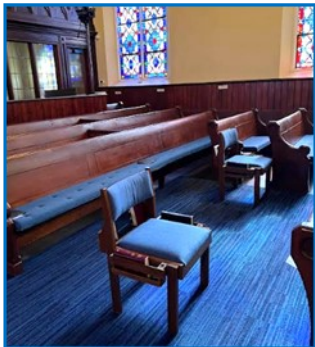


Our Rainbow Doors are back, with many thanks to Janet and Scott Allen, Charlie Eggleston, Bob Osterheldt, Rick Reid, and all the incredible middle and high school youth who lent their time and talent to create our beautiful new rainbow doors!

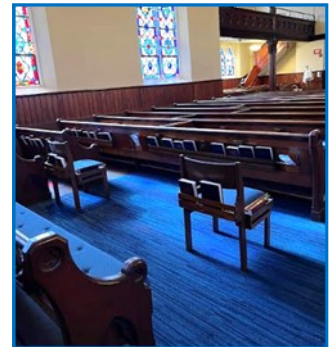
They look fantastic, and we couldn't have done it without your dedication and hard work.

**MIDDLE
SCHOOL
YOUTH
Coat Drive**

In November, FCC's Middle School Youth are on a mission to keep our community warm! During our traditional worship service at 10:00 am every Sunday in November, we will collect coats and winter gear for those in need. Your generous donations will make a real difference this winter, providing warmth and comfort to families in our community. Let's spread kindness and support one another together! Bring your gently used coats, hats, gloves, and scarves to church, and help us make a positive impact. Thank you for your generosity!



A huge THANK YOU to our incredible Building and Grounds crew for their hard work in making our sanctuary more wheelchair accessible! Your dedication is helping us create a space that's welcoming to all



2 Corinthians 2:14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

FCC CORE VALUES STORIES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7



The FCC Chancel Choir is Very Grateful

During this time of thanksgiving, the FCC Chancel Choir offers its most sincere thanks to Neil Adams and Pat Brown for their incredible contributions to Sundays! Neil, your hard work installing the mounted TV has enabled us, the choir, to engage with the media seamlessly during services. Pat, your generous donation of the TV itself, brings it all together beautifully. It truly enhances the experience, and we couldn't be more grateful to both of you!



The Missions and Outreach Committee is always thankful that they can count on our loving congregation to bring their Christmas spirit to the M & O CAN **Christmas Wish Tree**. This year, our FCC family provided over \$1,500 in funds for gifts for 10 older children, and purchased 60 requested gifts for 15 younger children. You are the reason these children will enjoy the season! Our committee also wishes to thank Jane Thomson for her generous help in organizing this year's effort.



Help FCC Host Men's Overnight Shelter



November 18 - 25

A HUGE THANK YOU to all those who provided food and to the hosts (some who did multiple overnight or midnight shifts) to make the 2024 FCC men's shelter a success. We had a big group with 19-24 men each night.

In the morning, they wiped down the tables, and mopped the floor most days. The food and snacks were plentiful and delicious. One social worker said the Rice Krispy Treats (provided by Liina Paasuke) were the best he could ever remember!

The men were especially appreciative of the gift socks, supplied by Marilyn McCallum and given out the last morning, complete with a treat inside! Marilyn's husband Dunc's persistence got the overnight shelter started many years ago. The men were very appreciative of your efforts and thanked us repeatedly, each, and every day.

Thanks everyone!



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

FCC CORE VALUES STORIES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

We also want to give a special shout-out to our night owls, who stayed from 6:00 p.m. - 12:00 a.m., or 12:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m., and sometimes both shifts back to back.



Greg Eggleston	Darcy Crain	Sven Hahr
Dave Steiner	Jim Miller	Richard Westbury
Mike Creal	Dave Neal	Glenn Rojo
Dick Mitchell	Chris Vermeulen	
John Eisley	Richard Lord	



Thank you to everyone for sacrificing your sleep for the cause! A huge thanks to Dave Steiner and Greg Eggleston for their leadership of the rotating shelter; we couldn't have done it without them.

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

~ Hebrews 13:2

FCC CORE IDENTITY

MISSION

We are a beacon of God's love, hope, and Christian freedom.

VISION

We are a joyous spiritual home, welcoming and valuing all people, engaging in God's Word, and enriching lives.

CORE VALUES

Compassion—We are a deeply caring faith community, demonstrating God's universal love and mutual respect.

Joy and Positivity—We are a faith community that faces life with open-mindedness, positivity, and a generous spirit.

Integrity—We are a faith community that builds trust through a commitment to authenticity and guided by the humility of Christ.

Courage—We are a faith community committed to persevere and grow in the midst of challenges and opportunities.

Inclusive—Whatever your story, we accept you as you are, and believe God's doors are open to all!



FCC UPCOMING EVENTS
DECEMBER 2024, JANUARY, FEBRUARY 2025 AND BEYOND

DECK THE HALLS

Annual All-Church Decorating Party (AFC)
Sunday, December 1



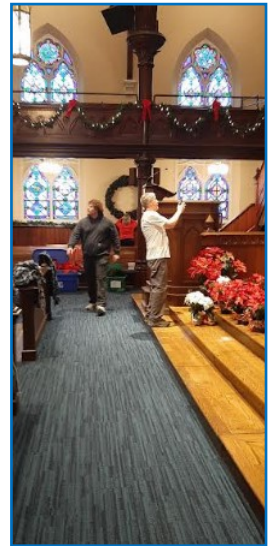
Chief Decorating Elf, Dave Steiner, along with Jared Peterson and George Sawitski, got everything staged and ready to go before the decorating party. After the 10:00 a.m. service, everyone received their instructions and set off to make FCC sparkle with the Christmas spirit. AFC provided a tasty lunch which all enjoyed after the decorating was done.



hohoho 



Chief Decorating Elf



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FCC UPCOMING EVENTS
DECEMBER 2024, JANUARY, FEBRUARY 2025 AND BEYOND

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10



There's a
brave soul
on top of the
Wilhelm!



Merry
Christmas



Oh
Christmas
Tree



Our
Sanctuary
All
Decked Out



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

FCC UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 2024, JANUARY, FEBRUARY 2025 AND BEYOND



The JFS Made Sale on Sunday, December 8, in Pilgrim Hall was a huge success. Jewish Family Services has launched a promotional effort for refugees that are establishing micro businesses. Perhaps you have seen some of their vendors at



locations around Ann Arbor such as the Summer Art Fair and at the Ann Arbor Farmers Market. On December 8, FCC hosted a market featuring makers from this program. Many of them created specialty-baked goods and foods, while others created clothing or tote bags/luggage. We had a chance to speak with them and purchase their products, just in time for the holidays. It was a great experience!



Meet some of our vendors: Maksym and his wife Alla fled from Ukraine and showed up with nothing after their home had been bombed, and their warehouse housing all of their beautifully made bags had also been destroyed. They narrowly escaped with a newborn and a 3-year old son. Arriving in the US, with the help of JFS, they began rebuilding their business and



Maksym also was hired as an engineer at Liebman. When he's not at that job he is helping Alla keep up their fashion accessory business!



Jacqueline Imani lived in a village in the Democratic Republic of Congo with her family and young children when fighting broke out there in 2008. Her parents and siblings were all killed and she fled with her very small children. She ended up in a refugee camp in Uganda where she remained for 15 years; surviving off her gifts of sewing, creating clothing and goods for sale. After all that time, the call finally came for her to get to leave the camp and go the US, but she had only 4 days to prepare. She came here with 4 children as a single mom. She works many hours in environmental services at Glacier Hills and still finds time to keep up her beautiful clothing business.

Maksym and Jacqueline have blessed us not only with their crafts but their incredible resilience and strength in the journeys that brought them here. Thank you both!



JFS Made Store
2245 S. State St
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
<https://jfsmade.square.site/>

JFS Made supports refugee entrepreneurs and other small business owners by connecting them with market opportunities to sell their products at local community events, Farmer's Markets, the JFS Made website, and inside the JFS Made store. JFS Made is a collection of brands and

creations by JFS clients for their community. JFS Made allows our clients the opportunity to gain visibility, test their product, build an audience, and begin to grow their business and start the building blocks of becoming economically self-sufficient.

FCC UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 2024, JANUARY, FEBRUARY 2025 AND BEYOND

Celebrate the holidays with the King of Instruments!

An Organists Christmas

Friday, December 13, 2024, 7 pm
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
2250 East Stadium Boulevard., Ann Arbor 48104

An Organist's Christmas

December 13, 7:00 p.m.

St. Francis of Assisi of Ann Arbor Catholic Church

Get into the holiday spirit with "An Organist's Christmas," presented by the American Guild of Organists! Join local talents Sarah Simco, Paul Haebig, and Lucia Skrobla as they fill the air with festive melodies on the stunning Létourneau pipe organ. The evening promises a delightful mix of solo performances and a lively sing-along of beloved Christmas classics.

It's the perfect way to celebrate the season!



Advent Special Music Sunday (Music)

FCC Chancel Choir and Chamber Orchestra

Sunday, December 15

Join us for an unforgettable morning of inspiring music on December 15th at 10:00 a.m. as the FCC Chancel Choir, under the expert direction of our Director of Music, Benjamin Gaughran, presents Magnificat by Michael John Trotta.

Don't miss the chance to experience this stunning musical performance live! Bring your friends, family, and neighbors for a beautiful, uplifting service. See you there!

Advent Afternoon of Fun! (BOCE)

Mark your calendars for December 15 at 11:15 a.m.!

Bring the whole family for an afternoon of festive cheer!

- Enjoy pizza
- Make gingerbread houses
- Get creative with Christmas crafts

All ages are welcome, so don't miss the holiday magic! **Want to help make this event unforgettable?...Please contact Marina at marina@fccannarbor.org to lend a hand.**



Classical Bells Christmas Bell Choir Concert (Music)

December 20 at 7:00 p.m.

Join us for an enchanting, family-friendly performance by Classical Bells, a celebrated Detroit-area handbell ensemble renowned for their interpretive flair, technical brilliance, playful choreography, with a touch of humor. Contemporary works by Fred Gramann and Cynthia Dobriski. Seasonal classics like "Ding Dong Merrily on High" and "Carol of the Bells." A festive sing-along of "Silver Bells." Accompanied by Tim Huth on our magnificent Wilhelm pipe organ.

Admission: Free! Donations are welcome to support the music ministry.

FCC UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 2024, JANUARY, FEBRUARY 2025 AND BEYOND



FCC Kidz & Youth:

Christmas Eve Pageant 2024 Sign-up (BOCE)

If you are interested in participating in this year's Christmas Eve Pageant on Tuesday, December 24, at 5:30 p.m., please sign-up in person at FCC, or call the office to request a form. Please submit one form per student.



If you have participated in the pageant before, you may notice that we have made some changes to our Christmas Pageant in hopes of making it more engaging for all ages.

Please email Marina at marina@fccannarbor.org if you have any questions.



Christmas Eve Meal for Staff and Volunteers (AFC) December 24, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Pilgrim Hall

This meal for volunteers is relatively new, and we want to make sure you know all about it.



Who: Anyone who has a volunteer role in making sure the Christmas Eve services are presented in such a way as we can be so proud of what we are offering to the world on this holy night. This includes ministers, all musicians, all FCC Staff, Pageant volunteers, Clean-up Crews, Live-Nativity volunteers, Deacons for both services, and Childcare workers.

What: Our Activities and Fellowship Committee prepares a delicious meal for the volunteers to come grab some nourishment, spend time with other volunteers and their families, take a break between services, eat after the 5:30 p.m. service, or before the 8:00 p.m. service. No charge, but free-will offerings gratefully accepted.

Why: Christmas Eve can be a difficult night to find a meal in between all the Christmas Eve stuff that needs doing. This meal is to help alleviate some of the pressure around finding the time to eat a good meal, while possibly relaxing for a half hour or so. It is also to say a sincere and loving thank you for contributing your time and talents to help keep our FCC Christmas Eve traditions alive and well.

Because we want to make certain we have enough for all participants, we ask that you *please RSVP for the dinner no later than Saturday, December 21*. Please contact Robbie at robbiesawitski@gmail.com or 517-888-3342 (mobile) or and let her know how many will be attending, and if you have any food preferences.

Annual All-Church Un-Decorating Party (AFC)

Sunday, January 5, 11:00 a.m.

Lunch for Un-Decorators at 12:00 p.m.

After the 10:00 a.m. service, gather for instructions with Dave Steiner in the sanctuary. He will send you off to the various areas of the church where leaders will be available to guide and answer questions as the decorations come down. All the containers for all the decorations will be in place beforehand. A tasty lunch will be served at 12:00 p.m.

Wear your work clothes to church, and plan to have a good time as it all comes down!



Christmas Banner Dedication Sunday, December 1



When Gae Miller and Diane Brown first met with me in the summer when snow was far from our minds, our quilters were planning on how to bless our sanctuary with Advent banners that matched the beautiful decorations we have each advent Christmas season. Advent is about waiting, and quilting requires a lot of time, anticipation, steps, and patience. In our culture of being able to amazon a solution to your front door in 24 hours, quilting is quite the opposite. So I find it fitting we dedicate these banners, a labor of love, in a season of anticipation.



They had an plan for a 3-d type of banner, though I had no clue how, as you can see, they pulled it off beautifully. When Lily and I first saw them, we commented on the berries, and Gae said, "You can't look at those berries and not smile." We couldn't agree more! May these banners bring a smile to all who see them as together we journey in Advent in anticipation of the birth of Christ.

**We dedicated them formally to
The First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor
in worship on Sunday, December 1,
in gratitude to the artists who created them, Diane Brown, Gae Miller, and Bernie Olzewski**



Year-End Giving Deadline December 31, 2023

Even though our fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30, the end of the year is a significant time for many of our members. As a reminder, if you want your contribution to be counted in the 2023 calendar year, please be sure to date your check no later than December 31, 2023, and it **must be received by January 5, 2024**. Please be aware that there are still delays in the mail system so mail your check early if that is how you contribute.

If you have any questions, please contact Crystal McBride at bookkeeper@fccannarbor.org. All year-end statements will be e-mailed the second week in January. If you would prefer to receive your statement by mail, please let Crystal know.

CHURCH COUNCIL
CHRIS VERMEULEN, CHURCH COUNCIL SECRETARY

Elected Positions



Church Council Chair: Ellen Rambo
Church Council Vice-Chair: Val Towery
Secretary: Chris Vermeulen
Treasurer: Dave Beck
Clerk: Gae Miller
Historian: Betty Bishop



Remaining Positions Filled by Board and Committee Positions

Board of Deacons Chair: Jennifer Santi
Board of Trustees Chair: Lou Candiotti
Board of Christian Education Chair: Eric Nicholson
Missions and Outreach Committee Chair: Suzanne Price
Music Committee Chair: Paul Fossum
Nominating Committee Co-Chairs: Rick Muhs and Kristy Stoneburner
Activities and Fellowship Committee Chair: Robbie Sawitski
Contemporary Issues Committee Chair: Sara Holmes
Ministers: Darcy Crain, Lily Tinker Fortel, Eric Hausman

Forward Goal Planning

- Using the theme for the year “Respecting Individuals, Journeying Together” Boards and Committees are starting on goal planning. The goals will help with budget planning next spring.
- Boards and Committees with budgets are working on reviews, which will assist both in tracking expenditures, but also future budgeting.
- A small group of members is reviewing the Bylaws with regard to the Board of Deacons duties as they relate to membership status.

Contact Information

Feel free to contact any member of the Church Council with questions, comments, or concerns. We appreciate your feedback on the activities of the Church.

Next Scheduled Meetings

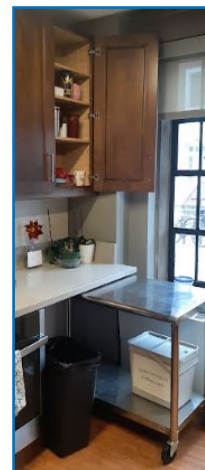
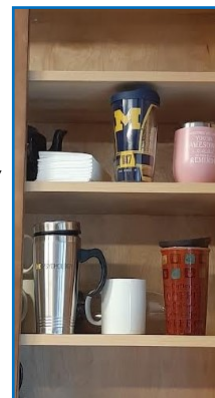
December 16, 2024
January 20, 2025



Do Any of These Things Belong to You?

As we come and go in our church home, we often forget to take our stuff with us when we leave. Whether you brought food for an event, or left your beverage on a counter, your item has been washed and put in one of two places.

You may check in the cupboard in the Kitchenette, or the counter over by the stove in the Pilgrim Hall Kitchen.



CHURCH COUNCIL
ELLEN RAMBO, CHURCH COUNCIL CHAIR

welcome

On behalf of the Church Council, I would like to, again, welcome our new FCC members, officially commissioned on November 17:

Cheryl and Bob Grant, Luda Khait and Phil Vilsides, Sheryl Kurze, and Sam Page. We are so happy that you choose to join our church as active members!



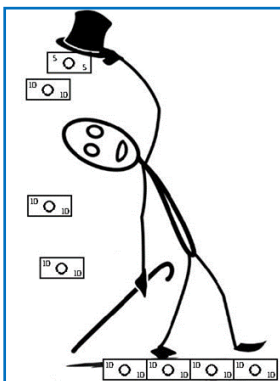
Church Council reviewed the Membership Section Article 3 (page 2) of our By-laws. It came to our attention while discussing the role of Deacons that the Committee holds responsibilities pertaining to membership that have neither been recognized nor performed in decades! These were responsibilities given to the Deacons early in the life of FCC, which made sense at the time. Given the growing needs of our church and our current culture, the Council acknowledged that it would be beneficial to update the by-laws to reflect the current practices and church operations. At the June Annual meeting, Council will present proposals to update the By-Laws sections 3.1 - 3.4. You will receive more information in the coming months.



The Church Council wishes all of you a healthy, safe, and joyful Christmas and New Year!



RAISE RIGHT - SCRIP CORNER
CHRIS VERMEULEN



We are in the 2nd quarter of the fiscal year. As of July 1, 2024, two families have raised \$75.00. We are looking for 1 or 2 more families to join us. How do you do that?

- Think of a place you frequent regularly (like Meijer, or Walmart, or Gordon Foods). You can check what is available at Raise Right without having an account. Sign up for a Raise Right account at RaiseRight.com. Our enrollment code is "484L973E22819"
- Order an e-gift or physical card (e-gifts you print for yourself and physical cards you have to pay for shipment but they can be reloaded later on).
- For those looking to buy physical cards to give as gifts, I would recommend

buying at your local store. The cost of having the cards sent to you is something you would have to pay for. Unfortunately, we are not keeping a stock of cards to purchase at Church.

I hope you will join us raise more money for Sr. High and Integrational work-trips this year If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please contact Chris Vermeulen at cnverm@aol.com.

HISTORIAN CORNER

BETTY BISHOP

Going back almost 100 years, the period of Rev. Allison Heaps' ministry at FCC, between July 1928 and the spring of 1937 was a challenging time for FCC. The Rev. Jump had left in 1927 following conflicts with some of the congregation. While the search went on for a new Senior Minister, a former FCC minister, Rev. Carl Patton, came over each weekend by train from the Chicago Theological Seminary where he was teaching, and he served as supply minister for a year. When Rev. Heaps started at FCC, financial conditions were deteriorating, men were out of work, and the general attitude was one of pessimism. Church collections diminished, attendance at Sunday services declined, and there were some physical problems with the church building. Many did like his sermons and he sought valiantly to hold the Church together during all of the stresses of the Great Depression.



At one point, there was discussion of a merger between the Presbyterian and Congregational churches with the understanding that both ministers would resign and the new enlarged church would call a new minister. They abandoned this proposal after considerable discussion by both churches. Rev. Heaps submitted his resignation in 1934, but it was not accepted, and he remained another three years. During that time, the church studied what should be its objectives and what program of activities would be most effective in



meeting these objectives. They concluded that members knew too little about the finances and administration of the church, that Sunday services were essential and more members should be encouraged to attend, and that religious education should be provided for all ages. They also recognized that new agencies had taken over many of the welfare and social services formerly sponsored by the church. In October 1937, FCC called Rev. Leonard Parr to ministry, beginning an era of many changes.

ACTIVITIES AND FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

ROBBIE SAWITSKI, CHAIR



SAVE THE DATES - Upcoming Events that are Sure to Bring a Smile

- Thursday, December 5 Advent Women's Evening (Pictures in the next Courier)
- Tuesday, December 24 Christmas Eve Meal for Staff and Volunteers (See page 14)
- Sunday, January 5 All-Church Undecorating Party (See page 14)
- Sunday, February 23 Beat the Winter Blues Potluck (Details to follow)
- Tuesday, July 17-19 Art Fair Fund Raising Event (Sign-ups are on page 20)

We are growing our team of adjunct members who like to know about upcoming events, in case they are available to assist. As our motto states, 'many hands make light the work', and sometimes AFC does a lot of heavy lifting. No obligation, ever! If you would like to be a part of this 'elite' group, (almost as elite as trash haulers, lol), please email me at robbiesawitski@gmail.com, and I will add you to our list.



Thank you to everyone who continues to step up and help with special set-ups, and clean-up after events.



May All Your Holidays Be Merry and Bright



TREASURER'S REPORT
DAVE BECK

The First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor July-October 2024-2025 Budget Detail	Budget YTD	Actual YTD	Variance YTD	Annual Budget 7/1/24 - 6/30/25
Revenue				
4000 Pledges	193,333.32	242,175.16	48,841.84	580,000.00
4100 Gift Contributions	37,749.96	13,196.48	-24,553.48	113,250.00
4200 Rentals	333.32	2,290.01	1,956.69	1,000.00
4300 Miscellaneous Revenue	3,383.32	8,954.13	5,570.81	10,150.00
4900 Pastoral/Discretionary Gift Contributions	0.00	25.00	25.00	0.00
Total Revenue	234,799.92	266,640.78	31,840.86	704,400.00
Expenditures				
5000 Ministry Expenses	29,368.32	23,396.83	-5,971.49	88,105.00
5100 Deacons	666.68	841.73	175.05	2,000.00
5200 Church Council/Stewardship	666.68	218.43	-448.25	2,000.00
5300 Activities & Fellowship	1,200.00	811.87	-388.13	3,600.00
5400 Office Expenses	7,616.68	7,517.98	-98.70	22,850.00
5500 Administration Expenses	34,416.68	21,027.68	-13,389.00	103,250.00
5600 Music	14,952.00	8,483.13	-6,468.87	44,856.00
5700 Christian Education	7,003.32	5,891.66	-1,111.66	21,010.00
5800 Contemporary Issues	200.00	50.00	-150.00	600.00
5900 Mission & Outreach	14,000.00	2,819.04	-11,180.96	42,000.00
6000 Building Maintenance, Operation & Property	28,466.68	30,478.58	2,011.90	85,400.00
6100 Utilities	10,666.64	5,896.28	-4,770.36	32,000.00
6200 Payroll Expenses	129,915.36	104,633.10	-24,882.26	388,546.00
6250 Payroll Fees	400.00	520.00	120.00	1,200.00
6300 Breeze Fees	0.00	850.97	850.97	0.00
6400 Pastoral/Discretionary Assistance	0.00	1,850.57	1,850.57	0.00
Total Expenses	279,139.04	215,287.85	-65,701.76	837,417.00
Net Operating Revenue	-44,339.12	51,352.93	97,542.62	-133,017.00
Trust Fund Distributions		50,000.00		
Balance	-44,339.12	101,352.93	97,543.62	-133,017.00

Notes

- This includes \$25,000 in September and \$25,000 in October from the General Investment Fund to cover general expenses.

Please feel free to contact me with questions at dbeck@provide.net.



*On behalf of the Board of Trustees and myself,
we are grateful for the continued support of our congregation.*

MISSIONS AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE
SUZANNE PRICE, CHAIR

JFS-Made Sale was Sunday, December 8

The JFS immigrant vendors were also selling on State Street on December 6 during the State St. Association's Friday Midnight Madness sales. Please see page 12 for details.

CAN, JFS and Hope Clinic Are Seeking Volunteers

Several local organizations that FCC supports through our grants are looking for volunteers. Our committee members Greg and Mary Jackson attended a tour at Jewish Family Services recently. The Jacksons and Colleen Creal completed a separate tour at Hope Clinic. Connie Nagel, of our committee, toured three of the sites CAN operates. Please speak with them to learn more about what these organizations do, and how you can volunteer to help them. You may reach them at Greg and Mary: greumar161@gmail.com, Colleen: creal@aaps.k12.mi.us, and Connie: dnagle@comcast.net.

CAN Christmas Wish Tree

Please see the FCC Core Value story on page 8 for details.

Donations to Church World Service

Contributions by our church members in October benefited the CROP Hunger Walk and Hurricane Helene Relief. Our FCC CROP Walk Team raised over \$2,000. Hurricane Helene Relief received \$2,819, from a combined \$1,000 church grant, and \$1,819 from funds contributed from our church members and friends. Thank you for your generous support of our neighbors near and far. Please see page 7 for our group photo from this years' CROP Walk.



*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
from all of us on the Missions and Outreach Committee*

Please Notice This



**Looking for the place to sign up for Art Fair R & R or Hospitality?
Here you go ...**



Direct Link for R & R sign up.

[https://www.signupgenius.com/
go/60B044AAEA62AA2F94-fccart5](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B044AAEA62AA2F94-fccart5)



Direct Link for Hospitality sign up.

[https://www.signupgenius.com/
go/60B044AAEA62AA2F94-fccart4](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B044AAEA62AA2F94-fccart4)

BUILDING AND GROUNDS SUBCOMMITTEE

JANET ALLEN, MEMBER

The Building and Grounds Subcommittee welcomed a new member, Bob Osterheldt. Bob comes to us with experience managing properties and quickly plunged in to help to install the rainbow doors outside the front entrance of the church last month. We are grateful to Bob for his interest in serving on the Building and Grounds Committee! Our latest accomplishments are:

- **New door hardware** entering Pilgrim Hall Kitchen from the lobby. The door had become nearly impossible to unlock and enter the kitchen so a new lock and door assembly with easy to open door handle was installed.
- **Choir TV Monitor** mounted under the North Balcony. The addition of this monitor allows the choir to view videos and slides broadcast during the church service on the screens behind their seats. (See page 8)
- **Wheelchair seating additions:** Earlier this year, we modified the two areas in the front row of the sanctuary to provide space for two wheelchairs and two companion chairs on each side. We now offer a choice for sitting near the back by providing space for two wheelchairs and two companion chairs in front of the sound booth. This brings the church up to ADA compliance by providing six spaces for our guests using wheelchairs and their companions. (See page 7)
- **Sidewalk replacement** along William Street. Several slabs of concrete sidewalk were broken during our latest tuck-pointing work. As part of the original contract with Cashero Raycraft, these slabs were slated for repair. In the meantime, the city of Ann Arbor marked three additional slabs as mandated for fixing. We are pleased to report Cashero Raycraft replaced the additional three slabs at no additional cost while they were doing the contracted work. This was a savings of \$1500 for FCC, and we continue to appreciate the generosity of Cashero Raycraft in the work they do for us.
- **Fall Yard Clean-up:** The grounds look amazing after the annual Fall Yard Clean-up. The Building and Grounds Committee appreciates everyone who worked at this event as well as the ongoing work of many members in various outside areas around the church throughout the year.
- **Water Intrusion Update:** A number of modifications have been made to the chimney outside the Sanctuary wall showing water damage. Moisture readings, taken at monthly intervals, show a continual reduction in the moisture content of the stone walls in that area since the modifications were completed. While it can take up to a year for the wall to dry out enough to do the inside repair, we are hopeful we are finally on the right track to solving this persistent issue.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

RICK MUHS AND KRISTY STONEBURNER, CO-CHAIRS



The Nominating Committee will be beginning their work in March to fill open positions on boards and committees. Please consider volunteering. All are welcome! Even if you're not a member, there are ways you can contribute. Questions? Please contact:

Rick Muhs, Co-Chair, rickmuhs@comcast.net, 734-730-1749

Kristy Stoneburner, Co-Chair, kstoneburner52@hotmail.com, 734-330-5290

Thanks to all for considering!

SMALL GROUPS

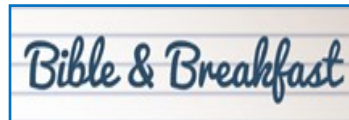


TUESDAY NIGHT SERIES ~ TNS

Please join us every Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m., in the Mayflower Room as we engage important themes through videos and conversation. For questions or comments, please reach out to Rev. Eric at eric@fccannarbor.org. All are welcome!

TEXT BREAKFAST

Our text breakfast group meets every Wednesday, from 9:00 a.m. to about 10:15 a.m., at the Alpha Koney Diner, 4389 Jackson Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. The preaching pastor leads the discussion. We offer Zoom to those who are unable to be present in person. Watch the text breakfast group email for the scripture passage that will be discussed. Please email Darcy at darcy@fccannarbor.org if you would like to join us.



MIND AND SPIRIT BOOK GROUP

Women of the church are invited to join us over the coming months. Come when you can! You don't even need to have read the book! We will enjoy a holiday luncheon after our December 18th gathering, and will do our annual Burning Bowl ceremony on January 8th. The group will also be doing a winter service project in support of a community organization. Please look over our interesting reads for the coming months.

- *Mayflower* by Nathaniel Philbrick
- *Love Your Enemies, How Decent People Can Save America from the Culture of Contempt* by Arthur C. Brooks
- *From Strength to Strength: Finding Success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the 2nd Half of Life* by Arthur C. Brooks
- *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova
- *The Newcomers, Finding Refuge, Friendship and Hope in an American Classroom* by Helen Thorpe
- *Stolen Pride: Loss, Shame and the Rise of the Right* by Arlie Russell Hochschild

Join us on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month, from 10:15 a.m. to 11:45 a.m., in the Mayflower Room or on Zoom. If you're interested in learning more, please contact gehaynes66@gmail.com.



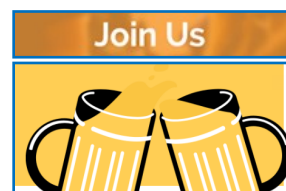
THEOLOGY ON TAP

Friday, January 25, 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Location TBD

Friday, February 28, 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Location TBD



LIVE Holiday Classical Guitar Music

Guitar music for Company Parties, Dinners, Holiday Gatherings and Celebrations

Contact Terry Farmer

734-660-4070

Terryfarmermusic.com

terryfarmermusic@gmail.com

ALL-CHURCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

Jan 31	6:00 p.m.	Violin Recital, Sanctuary
February 2025		
Black History Month		
Feb 1		Youth Retreat in Detroit (6th - 12th grade)
Feb 1-2		1 st day Collecting Food for Warming Shelter
Sun, Feb 2		Warming Shelter, FCC – Week 1 of 2, Pilgrim Hall
Feb 3-7		Text Breakfast, Alpha Koney Island
Feb 5, 12, 19, 26	9:00 a.m.	Mind and Spirit Book Group, Mayflower Room
Feb 5, 19	10:15 a.m.	Missions and Outreach Committee Meeting, Mayflower Room
Feb 5	5:00 p.m.	First Friday Family Fun Night, Pilgrim Hall
Feb 7	6:00 p.m.	CIC Presentation, Pilgrim Hall
Sun, Feb 9	11:15 a.m.	Warming Shelter, FCC – Week 2 of 2, Pilgrim Hall
Feb 10-14		Board of Trustees Meeting, Mayflower Room
Feb 10	7:00 p.m.	Valentine's Day
Feb 14		AAPS Mid-Winter Break
Feb 14-18		Music Committee Meeting, Mayflower Room
Sun, Feb 16	11:00 a.m.	AFC Monthly Meeting, Meeting Room
Feb 17		Presidents' Day
	7:00 p.m.	Council Meeting, Mayflower Room
Sun, Feb 23	11:00 a.m.	AFC Beat the Winter Blues Potluck, Pilgrim Hall
	11:15 a.m.	BOCE Meeting, Mayflower Room
Feb 27	4:00 p.m.	Building and Grounds Meeting, Mayflower Room
Feb 28	6:00 p.m.	Theology on Tap, Location TBA



SUNDAY FLOWER DONATIONS

Thank you to those who have provided flowers for the church on Sunday. They grace the altar of the church and generally benefit someone in the church after the service, whether it be the giver of the flowers as it often commemorates a special day in their life, or to pass along to someone connected to our Circle of Friends. We have older members of the congregation that don't get out as they used to and these flowers truly

brighten their day. One more tip, if you have a special day to commemorate, please sign up early. There is a sign-up sheet in the Mayflower Welcome Center or you can go to the FCC website, member resources, and sign up for flowers and/or lay reader. Please let the office know (or note it on the sign-up sheet) if you would like the Circle of Friends take them to one of our homebound members. Also, please let the office know the dedication wording to be used in the Sunday bulletin for the flowers. Thank you!

There are several ways to provide the altar flowers:

1. Call your favorite florist and order a bouquet to be delivered no later than noon on the Friday before the service to 608 E. William St., Ann Arbor, 48104.
2. Find flowers and make your own bouquet whether it be from your garden or Trader Joe's/Costco/Sam's Club. If you plan to bring them on Sunday, please call the office to let them know, 734-662-1679.
3. Call the church office at least a week before the date you chose for altar flowers and ask them to order Flowers for you. You will receive an invoice from the church or pay immediately by check, cash, or online. For online payment, go to the FCC website and pay as you would give a donation. Be sure to state the intent of the money in the memo line.



fccannarbor.org
 P.O. Box 7970
 Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7970
 (734) 662-1679

FCC STAFF

Rev. Dr. Darcy Crain

Senior Minister
 734-662-1679 ext. 112
 darcy@fccannarbor.org

Rev. Lily Tinker Fortel

Associate Minister
 734-662-1679 ext. 111
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Rev. Eric Hausman

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Director of Music
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Timothy L. Huth

Organist
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Joshua Marzan

Pianist
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Nancy Sauve

Congregation Liaison
 nancy@fccannarbor.org

SUNDAY IN-PERSON AND LIVESREAM WORSHIP

AND CHURCH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

8:30 a.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal
 8:50 - 11:15 a.m. Childcare available for Nursery and Preschool
 9:00 a.m. COP (Change of Pace), Pilgrim Hall
 9:30 a.m. Communion, Douglas Chapel
 10:00 a.m. Traditional Worship, Sanctuary, and FCC Kidz Programming
Both worship services will continue to be livestreamed online
 11:00 a.m. Friendship Time, Pilgrim Hall



December 2024

Sun, Dec 1	11:00 a.m.	All-Church Decorating Party, FCC
Dec 3, 10	7:00 p.m.	Tuesday Night Series, Mayflower Room
Dec 4, 11, 18	9:00 a.m.	Text Breakfast, Alpha Koney Island
Dec 4, 18	10:15 a.m.	Mind and Spirit Book Group, Mayflower Room
Dec 4	5:00 p.m.	Mission and Outreach Meeting, Mayflower Room
Dec 5	6:00 p.m.	Advent Women's Evening, Pilgrim Hall
Dec 6	6:00 p.m.	Merry Market (State Street District) and Carol Sing-along, Sanctuary
Sun, Dec 8	11:00 a.m.	JFS Micro-enterprise Market, Pilgrim Hall
	11:15 a.m.	BOCE Meeting, Mayflower Room
Dec 11	12:00 p.m.	Glacier Hills Luncheon
Dec 12	4:00 p.m.	Building and Grounds Meeting, Mayflower Room
Dec 13	7:00 p.m.	AGO presents "An Organist's Christmas" at St. Francis of Assisi, AA
Dec 14	9:00 a.m.	Chancel Choir and Orchestra Special Music Rehearsal, Sanctuary
Sun, Dec 15	10:00 a.m.	Advent Special Music Sunday, Sanctuary
	11:00 a.m.	Music Committee Meeting, Mayflower Room
	11:00 a.m.	Advent Afternoon of Fun, Pilgrim Hall
Dec 20		AAPS Winter Break Begins
	7:00 p.m.	Classical Bells Christmas Bell Choir Concert, FCC
Sun, Dec 22	9:00 a.m.	COP Special Music Sunday, Pilgrim Hall
	11:00 a.m.	Pageant Lead Rehearsal, Sanctuary
	11:15 a.m.	Christmas Star: An Astronomical Perspective Presented by: Jennifer German, Mayflower Room
Dec 24		Christmas Eve
	4:00 p.m.	Live Nativity, E. William Street
	5:30 p.m.	Christmas Pageant, Sanctuary
	6:30 p.m.	AFC Staff and Volunteer Meal, Pilgrim Hall
	8:00 p.m.	Candlelight/Communion Service, Sanctuary
Dec 25		Christmas Day - Office Closed
Sun, Dec 29	10:00 a.m.	Worship w/Hymn Sing, Sanctuary
Dec 31		New Year's Eve
		January 2025
Jan 1		New Year's Day - Office Closed
Sun, Jan 5	11:00 a.m.	All-Church Undecorating Party, Pilgrim Hall
Jan 6		AAPS Classes Resume
Jan 8, 15, 22, 29	9:00 a.m.	Text Breakfast, Alpha Koney Island
Jan 8, 22	10:15 a.m.	Mind and Spirit Book Group, Mayflower Room
Sun, Jan 12	11:15 a.m.	CIC Presentation
Jan 13	7:00 p.m.	Trustees Meeting, Mayflower Room
Sun, Jan 19	11:00 a.m.	Music Committee Meeting, Mayflower Room
	11:15 a.m.	AFC Monthly Meeting, Meeting Room
Jan 20		Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
	7:00 p.m.	Church Council Meeting, Zoom Only
Jan 23	4:00 p.m.	Building and Grounds Subcommittee Meeting, Mayflower Room
Jan 24	6:00 p.m.	Theology on Tap, Location TBA
Sun, Jan 26	11:15 a.m.	BOCE Meeting, Mayflower Room
Jan 28	5:00 p.m.	Violin Recital, Sanctuary



CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

We are a beacon of God's love, hope, and Christian freedom.