

Congregational Courier

THOUGHTS FROM DARCY CRAIN SENIOR MINISTER

Dear Friends:

I recently mapped out my December. When would I need which gifts for which people? Did I have any wrapping paper that isn't 5 years old? Forget it, did I have enough tape and tissue paper? When would I need the house host-ready and which dishes had I agreed to bring to which event? I had already mapped out the church-side of December in September because, well, it's my job to, but also, I'm slightly neurotic. I like things linear. I like goals and deadlines and metrics. And God laughed and said, "This one, she should be a pastor. That'll be fun."



The thing about God's grace and God's wisdom is that they don't come to us on our schedules, despite how meticulously we have made them. Whether it is about getting Christmas cards out, or the perfect gift, or the perfect gathering, or our new year's resolutions, none of it really happens on our schedules. God surprises us all the time. Usually, when I think I have pulled it off, when I'm patting myself on the back for my good planning and execution, God swoops in with grace, or a lesson in humility, or a realization that the metric I was using the whole time is crap, or "d" all of the above.

Isn't that how this whole story started anyway? The plan was to get married before starting a family. Then, plan B was to have the baby at home in Nazareth, where there were midwives, family, and support. Plan C was to register the now growing family on the required census. And then there's plan D – give birth to God incarnate in a barn in Bethlehem where your support is baaing sheep and some complete-stranger shepherds.

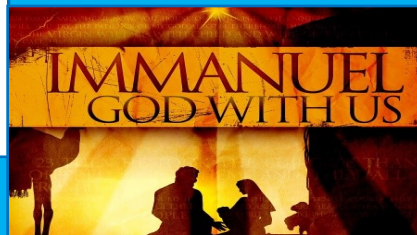
Per usual, God goes with option D – all of the above.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Darcy Crain.....	1,2
An Advent Poem.....	2
Lily Tinker Fortel.....	3
Eric Hausman.....	4,5
Join the Chancel Choir.....	5
Marina Baker.....	6,7
Advent and Christmas at FCC.....	8-10
December/January/ February Events.....	11,12
Save the Date.....	12
FCC and Our Community.....	13-16
Church Council.....	17,18
Historian's Corner.....	18
Contemporary Issues.....	18
Treasurer's Report.....	19,20
Building & Grounds.....	20,21
Missions & Outreach.....	21
Small Groups.....	22
Terry Farmer Guitar.....	22
Circle of Friends.....	23
Raise Right.....	23
AFC Hospitality and R&R Want You to Join Us.....	23
FCC Staff.....	24
Calendar of Events.....	24



Whatever Your Story, You're Welcome Here

As we enter this Christmas season and beyond into the new year, may you have the humor and humility to lead into whatever option D may be. Make your meticulous plans; trust me, your neurotic pastor will continue to do the same. But, together, may we be surprised by God's grace, wisdom, and humor. We will learn what God seeks to teach on a schedule we do not make, and in metrics and methods we did not pre-approve. And it will be brilliant. It will be 'all of the above' and beyond our wildest dreams.

Merry Christmas,



Darcy Crain
Senior Minister



AN ADVENT POEM

As you read this poem, may your heart be open to the countless ways you welcome God into your life each day.

“Making the House Ready for the Lord”

by Mary Oliver

Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but
still nothing is as shining as it should be
for you. Under the sink, for example, is an
uproar of mice it is the season of their
many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves
and through the walls the squirrels
have gnawed their ragged entrances but it is the season
when they need shelter, so what shall I do? And
the raccoon limps into the kitchen and opens the cupboard
while the dog snores, the cat hugs the pillow;
what shall I do? Beautiful is the new snow falling
in the yard and the fox who is staring boldly
up the path, to the door. And still I believe you will
come, Lord: you will, when I speak to the fox,
the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know
that really I am speaking to you whenever I say,
as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.



LILY TINKER FORTEL
ASSOCIATE MINISTER

What a fall it has been at FCC! We kicked off the start of the programming year in September and haven't looked back since! We explored meals and futurism/AI and second chances. With Terry back at COP, and Tim, Josh, Ben, and the Chancel Choir back in full swing, we've worshiped with beautiful music. Kids are back from summer break and loving FCC Kidz on Sunday mornings! Contemporary Issues topics have given us much to think about. Our middle and high school youth have gathered for fun, fellowship, and service. Many of our high school youth are helping with Sunday school on Sundays, and providing childcare for various FCC events month-to-month. We welcomed 17 wonderful new members in November! (see page 14) At the invitation of our Missions & Outreach committee, we bagged lunches, gave backpacks, and selected our Christmas wish tree tags for gift cards and gifts for area children. (see page 21) We've held that for which we're thankful in our hearts.



It's 10:30 p.m. on a Monday. We're *finally* in the midst of our first real snowfall of the season. I'm sitting on one of the couches in the Smith Welcome Center. FCC is hosting the overnight rotating shelter this week. 19 men are sleeping in our fellowship hall upstairs. Our overnight guests arrived at 8:00 p.m. We greeted them with the hope that they'll feel the warmth and welcome of FCC while they're here this week. **Hope.** They drank coffee, and unloaded their mattresses and blankets, and were nourished by a delicious vegetable beef soup, prepared by a member with love and care. **Love.** It was a bustling evening at first, but now I'm struck with the peaceful quiet of this space as the snow falls outside. **Peace.** The lights are dim. Every once in awhile, someone coughs upstairs. We can hear trains announcing their nightly pass through the city. A Michigan student passed by outside, taking pictures and clearly feeling joy at the snow falling. **Joy.**

Advent begins Sunday, December 3. Advent: coming. A time of preparation for Jesus's arrival and the transformations this season has in store for our lives. Just like the season of winter, we are invited to empty and release in order to receive the gift of renewal that comes for us with Jesus's birth. Hope, peace, joy, and love. We will reflect on these themes together in worship. As our journeys continue into the New Year, we will strive as we always do to live them out in our daily lives, and to bring them to our world. Although, as I found this evening, they don't always come in that order.

It is a joy to walk into this season of Advent and into another new year with you!

Lily Tinker Fortel
Associate Minister



The Journey Inward: Nurturing the Soul Through Spiritual Direction

I remember hearing about spiritual direction for the first time, back when I had just enrolled at Harvard Divinity School. The idea of it really struck a chord with me, and I have been involved with different aspects of this tradition for over 15 years. When I look at our lives and communities today, this kind of conversation and practice feels as needed as ever. As we navigate the complexities of our modern lives, many of us seek a deeper connection, purpose, and understanding of the sacred. In the midst of this quest for meaning, the practice of spiritual direction can help us find our way, offering companionship on the journey of the soul.



One can trace the history of spiritual direction in different ways, yet it remains a time-honored tradition that provides a sacred space for individuals to explore and deepen their spiritual lives. This usually takes place in the context of one-on-one sessions with a trained spiritual director, someone who serves as a compassionate companion and guide on the spiritual journey. Regardless of your religious background or beliefs, spiritual direction is a contemplative practice that embraces the universal human longing for connection and purpose.

The Heart of the Journey

At its core, spiritual direction is about creating a safe and confidential space for self-reflection, discernment, and exploration of one's relationship with the divine. Together with a spiritual director, individuals delve into the depths of their spiritual experiences, joys, challenges, and questions. The focus is not on providing answers but on facilitating a process of deep listening and discernment, helping individuals uncover the wisdom within themselves.

Diverse Paths, Shared Destination

One of the beautiful aspects of spiritual direction is its inclusivity. It embraces individuals from various religious traditions, denominations, and even those on a more secular or contemplative path. Spiritual directors honor the uniqueness of each person's spiritual journey and work collaboratively to discover the sacred in everyday life.

Benefits of Spiritual Direction

Deepened Spiritual Awareness: Through intentional reflection and contemplative practices, spiritual direction nurtures a heightened awareness of the sacred in daily life.

Personal Growth and Transformation: The journey of spiritual direction often leads to

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE](#)

ERIC HAUSMAN
ADJUNCT MINISTER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

profound personal growth, facilitating the integration of spiritual insights into one's life choices and actions.

Navigating Life's Crossroads: Spiritual directors provide support and guidance during significant life transitions, offering a contemplative perspective on decision-making and discernment.

Cultivating Inner Peace: The practice of spiritual direction encourages individuals to find solace and peace within, even amid life's challenges, fostering a sense of spiritual well-being.

New Spiritual Direction Program at FCC



There are already many ways to connect with the sacred through current programs and offerings at FCC. Whether you are part of one of our small groups or feel God's presence in our outreach events, there are many ways to nourish and challenge our spiritual lives. In addition to this list of offerings, we now add Spiritual Direction. If you are at a place in life where you feel like these kinds of conversations would be helpful to you, let me know. I feel lucky to be in a congregation where there is time and space to offer and provide this kind of ministry as well. To register, please contact the church office at office@fccannarbor.org or 734-662-1679.

Blessings on the journey,

Eric

Rev. Eric G. Hausman
Adjunct Minister

FCC CHANCEL CHOIR



Start Your New Year singing!

Ben enthusiastically encourages all church members to join your voice with ours and sing with us as we praise God. We gather because we love to sing and we enjoy each other's company. It's lovely to have new voices join us. Please come to rehearsal any Sunday at 8:15 a.m., or contact Ben Gaughran at ben@fccannarbor.org and let him know you are interested.

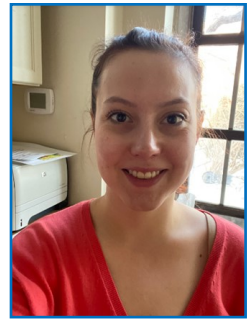
Psalm 96: "Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples."

MARINA BAKER
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY COORDINATOR

This fall our FCC Kidz and Youth have been very busy!

PUMPKIN CARVING

Our Middle and High School youth, and their families, carved 18 (large) pumpkins during the October service day.



They delivered many of these Jack-O-Lanterns to FCC members to celebrate the season.



VISITING A PUMPKIN PATCH

Some families with smaller children also joined us at a pumpkin patch where we fed goats, ate donuts, and picked pumpkins!



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

MARINA BAKER
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY COORDINATOR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6



VISITING A PUMPKIN PATCH

Also in October, we had four 3rd graders receive their (very specially wrapped) bibles, and Aurora even got to open hers in front of the whole congregation so everyone could see the meaningful layers of wrapping! To celebrate the holiday spirit on Halloween, our costumed students paraded in the sanctuary to meet Darcy and Lily. We also did fun Halloween crafts and discussed our costumes.



Christine Martinez has been a great addition to our Middle School Youth program! For Halloween, she planned a party for middle schoolers.

***MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH
HALLOWEEN PARTY***



November kicked off with our families again showing up to support our middle and high school youth, as they raked leaves in the yard of one of our member's houses (see page 16)

The Advent season is here! I am so excited to continue the festive and generous spirit I have felt throughout this fall working with our youth and families. In addition to the Advent Afternoon of Fun (see page 9), we are already preparing for this year's Christmas Eve Pageant (see page 10), and I am hopeful that this year will be warm enough for the animals to join us! Growing up in the church, I have always enjoyed the pageant, and the animals were my favorite part of Christmas Eve, as they participate in the live Nativity scene outside the church before coming inside to join the fun. This is my second Advent season as Children's Ministry Coordinator, and I am grateful for the support I have as we enter what is a very busy season! The volunteers, childcare workers, BOCE, and all of the FCC staff are wonderful to work with, and I am looking forward to spending the season with my church family!

Marina Baker
Children's Ministry Coordinator

ADVENT AND CHRISMAS AT FCC

- 
- | | | |
|--------------------|------------|---|
| December 3 | 3:00 p.m. | Vocal Arts Ensemble Concert |
| December 5 | 12:00 p.m. | Good Grief Luncheon |
| December 7 | 6:00 p.m. | AWE - Advent Women's Evening |
| December 7, 12, 14 | | Advent Reflection Time |
| December 10 | 10:00 a.m. | The Ballad of the Brown King
(Chancel Choir and Orchestra) |
| | 11:00 a.m. | Advent Afternoon of Fun |
| | 4:00 p.m. | Classical Bells Christmas Concert |
| December 13 | 12:00 p.m. | Glacier Hills Luncheon |
| December 16 | 10:00 a.m. | Pageant Rehearsal for Lead Roles |
| December 17 | 4:00 p.m. | Pageant Rehearsal and Taco Bar |
| December 20 | 7:00 p.m. | Blue Christmas COP Worship Service |
| December 24 | 10:00 a.m. | Traditional Worship Service with Hymn Sing |
| | 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 31 | 10:00 a.m. | Traditional Worship Service |
| January 7 | 11:00 a.m. | All-Church Un-Decorating Party |
- ~ You can see all FCC Events at fccannarbor.org/calendar ~



Thursday, December 7, 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. (check-in at 5:30 p.m.)

It's almost time, and there are still some seats available. The cost is \$28.00 per person. Please contact Robbie Sawitski at 517-888-3342 or robbiesawitski@gmail.com to reserve your spot.

If you would like to attend and the price is a detriment to your participation, we have several Complimentary “Angel” ticket seats just for you! We want everyone to participate who wants to! Please contact **Darcy Crain** at darcy@fccannarbor.org for your Angel ticket.

Also, please ask about our Childcare and Light Evening Meal for Kids by reservation only, at no additional cost.

ADVENT AND CHRISMAS AT FCC

2023 Advent Devotional and Reflection Time

Glow is a devotional from the StillSpeaking Writers' Group, a group of United Church of Christ clergy. You can pick up your copy at the Smith Welcome Center, and in the entrances to the sanctuary and Pilgrim Hall. We hope it will provide meaningful spiritual grounding and reflection throughout Advent.



Advent Reflection Time

Thursdays, December 7, 12, and 14 at 12:00 p.m.

Please join us at FCC in person, or via Zoom for 30 minutes of prayer and reflection each week during Advent.

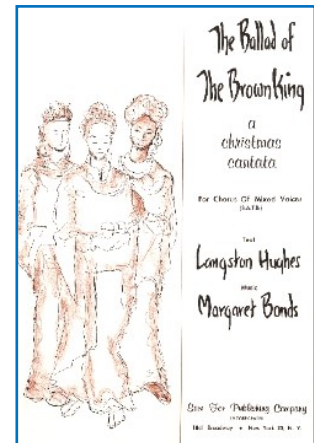
Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2922461488?pwd=f0GBn1ByLwQiFofsRFQy6mGQaNXW99.1>

FCC Chancel Choir Special Advent Music Presentation

December 10, 10:00 a.m. worship service (Music)

Director of Music, Ben Gaughran's arrangement of *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing* will augment the choir's special offering of *The Ballad of the Brown King* by Margaret Bonds. *The Ballad of the Brown King* is a cantata and may be Margaret Bonds' most frequently performed work. It was written in honor of the African king, Balthazar, with text written by Langston Hughes for Bonds. The Ballad premiered in December 1954 in New York and was performed by the George McClain Choir. Although there have been recordings of subsequent performances of The Ballad, Margaret Bonds' original orchestration is unpublished and has never been recorded. The cantata is made up of nine movements with parts for soprano, tenor, baritone and choir.



Advent Afternoon of Fun (BOCE)

December 10, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

An annual favorite "Good Time" at FCC, you won't want to miss this event! Crafts, gingerbread houses, and pizza will help get our holiday spirits going. All members of all ages are invited to come and have some Advent Fun together.

'Tis the season for sharing 'Good Times'



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT FCC

Classical Bells Christmas Bellchoir (Music)

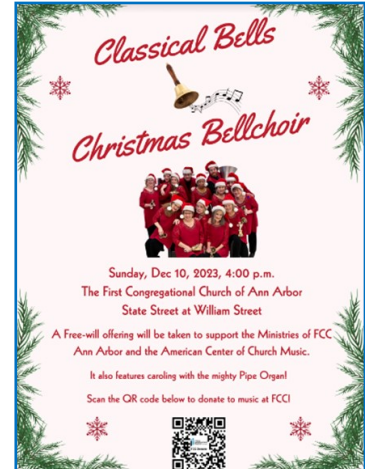
December 10, 4:00 p.m. at FCC

Free will offering. Children of all ages are welcome.

This local professional handbell ensemble has graced stages and churches since 1984. Seasonal favorites such as Carol of the Bells, a Celtic version of I Saw 3 Ships, God Rest Ye, Merry, and caroling with the Wilhelm Pipe Organ will be featured.



*Sponsored by The American Center of Church Music and
The First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor*



Blue Christmas COP Worship Service (Music) Wednesday, December 20, at 7:00 p.m.

The holiday season can be difficult for those whose hearts are hurting. The First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor would like to invite you to our Blue Christmas service on Wednesday, December 20, at

7:00 p.m. in Pilgrim Hall. This COP service offers a sacred holiday space to those for whom the holidays might be trying. If you have undergone a difficult loss, transition, or life change, the church cares about you and invites you to this special time of music and worship. We pray you will find hope and comfort in knowing you are not alone. Always remember that God knows your pain and loves you unconditionally.

In the Western Christian tradition, Blue Christmas usually occurs around December 21, the Winter Solstice. We hope you will join us.

Christmas Eve Pageant (BOCE)

December 24, 5:30 p.m.

FCC Kidz and Youth all come out to make this annual favorite family-friendly worship service one you will always remember! You don't want to miss it, especially the live animals in our sanctuary!

If you are participating in the pageant, please see the holiday schedule on page 8 for your rehearsal dates and times.



DECEMBER / JANUARY / FEBRUARY EVENTS

YOGA at FCC (AFC)

Saturday, December 2 and 9

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., Donation based!

Upstairs in Pilgrim Hall



These will be our last two classes until Spring. Our instructor, Jill Diwan, will be in India until March. Please check the next Courier and watch the Tuesday and Friday emails for updates to when we will begin again. You can also keep up with us on our group Facebook page, *Yoga at The First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor*.



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.

Annual All-Church Un-Decorating Party (AFC)

Sunday, January 7, 11:00 a.m.

12:00 p.m. Lunch for Decorators

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!



Lent Begins Ash Wednesday

February 14

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord isn't slow to keep his promise, as some think of slowness, but he is patient toward you, not wanting anyone to perish but all to change their hearts and lives.

DECEMBER / JANUARY / FEBRUARY EVENTS

The Daytime Warming Shelter (M & O) **Monday through Friday, February 19 - March 1**



This schedule differs from previous years in that it is consecutive weekdays so that the individuals served can travel with their belongings to the same location each day instead of splitting time between two churches in the same week. FCC members and friends can help by signing up for a shift to help with the daily breakfast and lunch our church provides. Also needed will be donations of ingredients and supplies for the meals to be prepared in the FCC kitchen during the shelter days; home-baked cookies, activity supplies, or coordinating activities such as arts/crafts or board games. To sign up to participate, use the link found in the FCC weekly email that will appear starting mid-January.

SAVE THE DATE ALL-CHURCH EVENTS

Intergenerational Mission Trip **April 15 - April 21, 2024**



Looking to make a difference? Put your faith into action? Get to know other FCC members on a deeper level? Then this trip is for you. FCC has led multiple trips termed "Intergenerational Mission Trips," and we are excited to offer another opportunity this programming year. Please mark your calendars, request work off, and plan to join us April 15-21 as we travel to Madisonville, KY to rebuild homes, after a devastating tornado destroyed many almost 3 years ago. The rebuilding work is still mounting, and we can answer the call to serve and love our neighbor. You don't need to know how to do home repair work; we will teach you as you go, and many tasks are required.

We will be staying at a local church that has been outfitted to house groups like ours — beds, showers, and kitchen facilities are all on site, and if you're more of a hotel-speed, there are local hotels as well. Madisonville, KY is a days drive, making it an accessible option for travel. We even hope to catch the Mammoth Cave National Park on our way home!

Annual Ann Arbor Art Fair Mission Trips Fundraising Events (AFC) **Hospitality Station and R & R (rubbish & recycle) July 18 - July 20, 2024**

Your R&R Leaders are so very proud of, and grateful for the group of volunteers who show up each year, and for some reason keep coming back, once they've tried it. You see, in all honesty, yes, it is challenging. But, it's for an amazing cause (Mission Trips), and also is a remarkably fun time, full of laughter, camaraderie, sharing our stories, and growing new friendships, as well as deepening others. We look at it as a mini-mission trip. Our Sign-up Genius is already up and running. QR code and Links can be found on page 23. For more information or help signing up, please email Chris at cnverm@aol.com.

FCC AND OUR COMMUNITY

NEWS AND INFORMATION

FCC FOOD PANTRY (M & O)

Your donations get put right to use! Hope Clinic's Food pantry is a pantry of choice. Participants are scheduled by an appointment and can come once a month. They shop with a volunteer who can help them make choices in 20 different categories. They usually leave with 6-8 bags of groceries.



Memorable moments from a recent shift: a new immigrant from Mali delighted to put his pin on our wall map. A non-English speaking couple with a new baby coming for diapers, whose 7 year old daughter was proudly serving as their interpreter! 2 senior women, both with mobility issues, coming together and expressing gratitude for this resource. A man who came by bicycle and left with his groceries in a backpack and 2 hanging bags balanced on his handlebars!

Items always in need:

Hearty soups, Macaroni and cheese, Spaghetti sauce and pasta,
Canned meats, Peanut butter, Beans and vegetables, Baking items, Toothpaste, Soap

Please place your donations on the food collection shelves in the Smith Welcome Center.



FCC Merchandise Online Store NOW OPEN

Thanks to the efforts of our marketing committee led by Trevor Towery, we are excited to offer you FCC merchandise like this quarter zip Darcy is modeling for us.



Check out the store here:

<https://merch.undergroundshirts.com/collections/first-congregational-church-of-ann-arbor> or visit our website; it is linked on the home page towards the bottom. Feel free to reach out with any questions!

Snow Removal Help

As winter sets in, we all know that shoveling snow can be quite a task. While some people may enjoy it, others may find it difficult and need assistance. Fortunately, the city of Ann Arbor has launched a program to assist those who need help with snow removal during winter. To qualify for the program, you must be 55 or older, self-identify as having a disability, or have no resources nearby to help with snow removal. If you meet these requirements or want to volunteer to help, please check out this link:

<https://www.a2gov.org/departments/police/units/Pages/Snow-Match.aspx>

FCC AND OUR COMMUNITY

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Welcome Jared Peterson FCC Office Manager

We are thrilled to announce that Jared Peterson is our new office manager! Jared has been working at FCC in various ways for eight years. You have seen his work with media through our live streaming and have likely been the recipient of his work ethic and commitment to FCC. We look forward to working with and welcoming him as a full-time member of our staff!



"Getting to Know You" Name Tags

(Church Council)

Meeting people at FCC just got a whole lot easier! Thanks to the hard work of Jane Thomson, we now have our first batch of name tags ready for you! Whether you're a member or a first-time visitor, these name tags will make it easier to identify one another and prompt conversation. So, head to the Smith Welcome Center lobby this Sunday for your permanent or temporary name tag. Please return your permanent name tag to the Smith Welcome Center lobby after the service you attend. We've provided music stands and magnetic whiteboards for your convenience.



New Member Sunday (Deacons) November 5

welcome

On Sunday, November 5, we welcomed the following new members into our church family:

Deanna Boer

Alison Boulan

Joan Brush

Fred Castenholz

Richard Lord

Titus Matthews

Roy and Sue Muir

Le Nguyen

Somto Okoye

Nancy Sauve

Jeff and Marge Stearns

Pamela Widmayer

Jane and Tom Ziesemer

Please be sure to welcome them, and introduce yourself!

*Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship our spirit finds is like to that above.*

*Before our Father's throne, we pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one—our comforts and our cares.*

FCC AND OUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND INFORMATION

CROP Walk - FCC raised over \$2,600 (M & O)

October 15

FCC had 15 members gather to walk at Zion Lutheran Church, Ann Arbor. Afterward walkers enjoyed a delicious soup and other made-to-order choices provided by Zion's FEDUP Food Truck staff. The FEDUP Food Truck is Zion's mission to offer free meals to food-insecure people in Washtenaw County, driving to locations where those populations are. Thanks to all who gave so generously to this vital cause.



FCC Middle School Youth November Coat Drive (BOCE)

Thanks, Nate and Eric, for your invaluable help unloading donations for the FCC Middle School Youth Coat Drive. We are grateful to everyone who contributed. Your kindness will make a significant difference to those struggling during our Michigan winters. Thank you all for your unwavering generosity and positive impact on others.



Youth Clean-up Service Project (BOCE)

November 6

Wow, take a look at this spick and span yard! A big "Shout-Out" to the Middle School and High School Youth, their parents, and Chris Vermeulen, who came together and worked hard to make an FCC member's yard look brand new again. You guys are amazing, and we really appreciate your kindness and hard work!



FCC AND OUR COMMUNITY

NEWS AND INFORMATION

FCC Grounds Clean-up Day (Building & Grounds)

November 4

It takes a team of dedicated gardeners to keep our grounds and memorial garden in tip-top shape. We are so grateful for the hard work provided by our members. Not everyone made the group photo, but Dave, Fritz, Judy, Jared, Jane, Darcy, Pam, Dan, Marti, Bob and Joan sure did work hard!

Thanks for coming out for the fall clean up. We were done in about 2 hours! What a fantastic crew!



It was also discovered that Rev. Crain is an expert at opening yard recycle bags.



Pete Sandretto also dedicated several hours to winterizing the Memorial Garden fountain.

FCC All-Church Decorating Party (AFC)

November 26

HAPPY★NEW★YEAR

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who spent their time and effort decorating the church this past Sunday. Your hard work and dedication brought out the Christmas Spirit in the church and created a warm and welcoming environment for all who enter.

Men's Overnight Rotating Shelter (M & O)

November 27 to December 2

Dave Steiner and Greg Eggleston coordinated this year's overnight shelter for the week of November 27 through December 3. Church volunteers took four hour shifts to provide hospitality to homeless men selected for the program by the Shelter Association of Ann Arbor. Other volunteers dropped off breakfast food, evening meals and snacks for the guests who stayed for the night in Pilgrim Hall. Thank you for Dave Steiner's leadership and to all of the FCC participants who offered their help to those without a place to sleep in our community.

CHURCH COUNCIL

CHRIS VERMEULEN, CHURCH COUNCIL SECRETARY

Elected Positions

Church Council Chair: Ellen Rambo
Church Council Vice-Chair: Val Towery
Secretary: Chris Vermeulen
Treasurer: Mike Dabbs
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
Minister: Darcy Crain, Lily Tinker Fortel, Eric Hausman
PRC (Pastoral Relations Committee): Debbie Bourque, Colleen Creal, Ray Decker, and Rick Reid

Current Activities

Change of Pace Service:

The plan is to offer the Change of Pace service on a Wednesday to give people an opportunity to check it out. The next Wednesday offering is the Blue Christmas COP Worship service at 7:00 p.m. on December 20 (see page 10). The regularly scheduled time of 9:00 a.m. on Sundays is unchanged.

August Retreat Follow Up:

The Church Council continues to review the ideas brought up during the meeting. Recently we made name tags available on Sunday mornings (see page 14). The focus is on ways to engage members of the congregation.

Covid 19 Health Safety Committee (a sub-committee under the Church Council):

Currently, the building remains open, with masks recommended in most all areas except the FCC Kidz nursery room (where masks are still required). The status is subject to change as needed, and updates are published in the Friday/Tuesday Emails.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

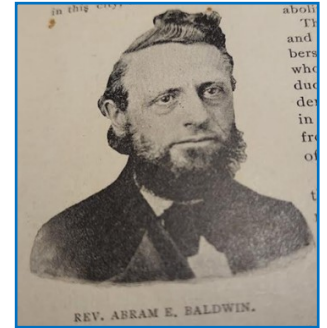
HISTORIAN CORNER

BETTY BISHOP

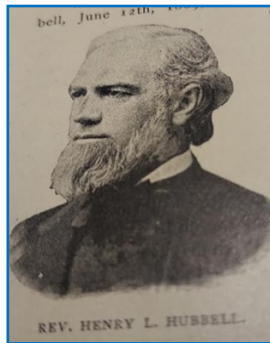


REV. S. D. COCHRAN.

We will continue with our review of the early FCC ministers, covering the period between 1858 and 1876 when the church moved into the present stone building at State and William. The first of this group was Rev. Samuel Cochran, who served from 1858 to 1861. After 18 months, he resigned when the church could not raise his salary. This may have been a result of the Civil War, which had started some months before his resignation. For the next year there was no regular minister and the church continued to have financial concerns. Then, Rev. A.F. Baldwin was called and served from 1862 until 1867. He was hired for **\$800 a year** but eventually resigned for financial reasons. His successor, Rev. W.A. Smith, only stayed for a year. During this period, the church decided to cease having



REV. ABRAM E. BALDWIN.



REV. HENRY L. HUBBELL.

formal installations of pastors; this practice continued for many years with only two exceptions. In April 1869, the church called the Rev. H.L. Hubbell at a salary of **\$2000 a year**. He came from Amherst, MA, and was well-liked. Unfortunately he had to resign in October 1875 due to ill health. He did oversee the church during the building and dedication of the Stone Church. When he resigned, the church passed resolutions appreciating his work and the work of his wife; this was the first time a minister's wife had been recognized for her contributions.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES COMMITTEE

SARAH HOLMES, CHAIR

**2023-2024
SECOND
SUNDAY
SERIES**

October 8 Artificial Intelligence
November 12 Exploring Special Music at FCC
January 14 Equitable Ann Arbor Land Trust
February 11 Gun Violence, Gun Safety
March 10 Preserving Farm Land in Washtenaw County
April 14 Children and Youth Act on the Climate Crisis

Contemporary Issues; Critical Conversations

Second Sundays
11:15am
The First Congregational
Church of Ann Arbor
608 E. William St.

January / February

- Jan 14 Equitable Ann Arbor Land Trust
- Feb 11 Gun Violence, Gun Safety
Physicians against gun violence /
Police community liaison



CHURCH COUNCIL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

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

No Meeting in December, 2023
January 15, 2024
February 19, 2024
March 18, 2024

TREASURER'S REPORT

MIKE DABBS

The First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor 2023 – 2024 SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT - *Preliminary* October 31, 2023

	ACTUAL 10/31/2023	APPROVED BUDGET 7/1/23 - 6/30/24	ACTUAL PERCENT BUDGET	NOTES
REVENUE				
Pledges	\$ 134,186	\$ 570,000	23%	
Gifts – Operations	14,038	60,000	23%	
Other Income	8,6681	46,980	18%	
Special Funds Transfer	<u>-0-</u>	<u>4,000</u>	0%	1
Total Revenue	\$ 156,905	\$ 680,980	23%	
EXPENSES				
Ministry	\$ 62,804	\$ 210,895	30%	
Deacons, Council, C.I.C., AFC	1,060	8,100	13%	
Administrative/Office	63,144	332,082	19%	
Christian Education	4,088	51,420	8%	
Music	21,044	95,887	22%	
Missions & Outreach	(554)	43,000	(1%)	
Maintenance & Utilities	<u>34,931</u>	<u>112,750</u>	31%	
Total Expenses	\$ 186,517	\$ 854,134	22%	
NET REVENUE	(\$ 29,612)	(\$173,154)		
TRUST FUND DISTRIBUTION	<u>+\$ 25,000</u>	<u>+\$ 176,375</u>	14%	2
BALANCE	\$ (4,612)	\$ 3,221		

NOTES

1. Pastoral Fund distribution of \$3,500 for M&O, and pastoral assistance.
2. 2021-2022 Budget projected distribution from trust and endowment funds is 6% (\$141,896). Included is additional one-time distribution of \$41,300 to cover Livingston sabbatical and vacation costs.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

TREASURER'S REPORT

MIKE DABBS

\$134,186 in pledge revenue has been received during the first four months of this fiscal year. Ideally, we would like pledge revenue to be about 33% of this year's total pledge revenue budget, or \$188,100. By mid-November, pledge revenue had increased to \$196,000 which will greatly assist the church with its cash flow. Loose offerings and other gifts received were nearly \$22,000. Nearly all major expense categories were running less than budget. As a result, our Net Revenue at the end of October was (\$29,612), which is half of what it was last year. Also, you will notice our Actual Total Revenue percent of Budget is 23%, and Actual Total Expenses is 22% for the first four months, which indicates that we are remaining in a positive budget position.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

UHY has begun its work doing a Financial Review of Fiscal Year 2022-23 (July 1, 2022 – Jun 30, 2023). The Trustees anticipate receiving the Financial Review at their January meeting, and once it is accepted, it will be available for review by members.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN WRAPPING UP

Can you believe it was five years ago that we kicked off our capital campaign? When we announced the campaign "Vision 175—Investing in our Future" to prepare our church for its 175th anniversary, our goal was to raise \$2,000,000. Ultimately, we had 183 members pledge \$2,005,735! And as remarkable as the campaign was, today, five years later, we have only \$45,000 in pledges that remain to be paid. Over the next few months, we hope to collect as much of this remaining balance as possible in order to bring the campaign to an end.

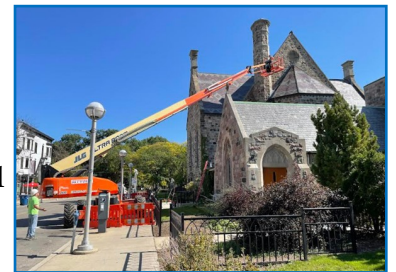
In the past month, our Bookkeeper, Crystal, sent all members their current Statement of Giving, which included what may still be owed on their capital campaign pledge. We would appreciate you paying the balance within the next few months, or if life circumstances have changed that prevent you from paying this balance, please contact Crystal, or me.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS SUBCOMMITTEE

JANET ALLEN, MEMBER

Sanctuary Water Intrusion Update

Extensive work has been completed on the outside west wall of the Sanctuary building. This included 4 weeks of tuck pointing work, repair to the outside louver vent, and a forensic inspection using water testing to determine where the leak was occurring. A roof flashing, which had deteriorated due to heat and weather, was determined to be the problem. That has now been repaired so we will be moving on to the inside plaster and paint repair when that area is dry enough and the sanctuary is available for a couple of weeks of scaffolding.



Pilgrim Hall Kitchen

Several items not included in the Capital Campaign but needing repair have been accomplished. The stove fan has been replaced, as well as the faucet and shut off valves at the dishwasher sink. Since the new stove is rarely in use and the pilot lights were giving off significant heat and odor, we have decided to shut the gas off between uses. This has made a significant difference in the comfort of the kitchen. A list of people able to

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

BUILDING AND GROUNDS SUBCOMMITTEE

JANET ALLEN, MEMBER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

light the pilot lights is posted near the stove. We will, of course, leave it on during cooking weeks such as overnight shelter and warming shelter. Contact Jared at the office or someone on the list any-time you anticipate needing the stove.

New Pilgrim Hall Stage Window Blinds

Light-blocking shades, matching the paint color of the stage walls, have been installed to improve the look of that area when viewing performances in person and online. No more distracting points of light coming through!\ from the windows on the west wall!

Fall Yard Clean-up

We are thankful to all of the church members who continue to help with planting flowers and yard work throughout the year, as well as maintaining the Memorial Garden Fountain. (see page 16)

William/Maynard Sign

Our sign at the corner of William and Maynard received some much-needed TLC from Janet Allen and Jane Thomson, who cleaned the limestone and then repainted the engraved lettering. The sign, generously donated by the Post family, was designed by Scott Allen; Tom Fuleky did the beautiful stonework.



Future Project

We are working on a plan to increase wheelchair seating in the sanctuary and to make the two existing areas ADA compliant. This work will also be coordinated when disruption to the use of sanctuary is minimal.

MISSIONS AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

SUZANNE PRICE, CHAIR

Food and Supplies for the Hope Clinic of Ypsilanti Pantry: See page 13

CAN Christmas Wish Tree: Our project providing gifts to the children served by Community Action Network of Ann Arbor took place November 12 - December 3. FCC donors selected tags that each described a gift wish request. This year, thanks to the sewing contributions of Diane Brown, Gae Miller and Jane Thomson, we hung a beautiful new fabric Christmas tree on which to hang the gift tags for the M & O bulletin board located in the Welcome Center. Their work is beautiful and will be a pleasure to display in the future, too! We helped 30 CAN children to each receive 4 gifts worth about \$25 apiece. Gifts delivered to CAN by December 4 are given to the children's parents to wrap and then distribute to the kids at CAN's holiday party. The families and staff at CAN very much appreciate FCC's long-time support of this important program. Thank you to our generous FCC gift-givers whose Christmas spirit brings joy to these children.



Men's Overnight Rotating Shelter: See page 16

Ann Arbor CROP Hunger Walk: See page 15

SMALL GROUPS

TUESDAY NIGHT SERIES ~ TNS

Please join us every Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome as we engage important themes through videos and conversation. **We will not meet on December 26 or January 2.** For questions or comments, please reach out to Rev. Eric at eric@fccannarbor.org.

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. **We will not meet on December 27.** Please email Darcy at darcy@fccannarbor.org if you would like to join us.

ALL ARE WELCOME!



MIND AND SPIRIT BOOK GROUP

This small group welcomes women of the church who are interested in meeting other members and discussing books dealing with spirituality or contemporary issues. We meet the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month from 10:15-11:45 in the Mayflower Room and by Zoom.

In December, we will be finishing *The Third Jesus* by Deepak Chopra. Upcoming 2024 books are *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us*, by Ed Young, and *Broke in America* by Shaddox and Goldblum.

Please email Gail Haynes at gehaynes66@gmail.com for more info, or to join our email list.

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

FCC's Middle and High School Youth meet regularly throughout the year!

- Middle School Youth meet every Sunday during 10:00 a.m. worship.
- High School Youth meet Monthly at Darcy's House. Usually on fourth Thursdays from 7:30-9:00pm. Upcoming dates: January 25 and February 22 at Darcy's, and March 28 at FCC for Maundy Thursday.
- Middle and High School Youth also meet monthly for service and/or fellowship events.
- Confirmation Class for 8th grade youth will take place January - April 2024.



*Sounds
of The
Season*

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

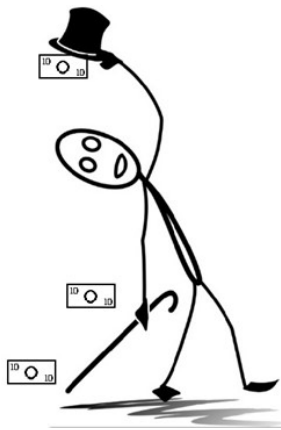
CIRCLE OF FRIENDS
AN OUTREACH MINISTRY OF FCC
MARY ANN MARQUARDT

Circle of Friends (COF) is a visitation and assistance ministry that links home-centered members, including those in long-term care facilities, and Circle of Friends (active members of The First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor) in a one-to-one relationship. COF provides a caring connection to the church through regular visits, spiritual support, and other kinds of assistance as appropriate for both parties. COF offers support to not only seniors, but also to those church members who are experiencing isolation at home due to health issues, loss of a loved one, or other family stressors. Please contact Mary Ann Marquardt at 313-303-1989 if care is needed, or if you would like to join our group. Also, please let Mary Ann know if you know someone who could benefit from having a friend.



Thank you so much!

RAISE RIGHT - SCRIP CORNER
CHRIS VERMEULEN



Since July 1, 2023, we raised \$322.00 using Scrip (reloadable gift cards and e-gift certificates). This is a combination of 3 families making on-line orders and the big Congregation order on November 7. You can help us raise more money for Sr. High and Intergenerational work-trips by using Scrip. Scrip gives the church a percentage of the amount you purchase with Scrip. I would recommend starting with e-gift certificates for one or two places where you shop regularly. You can look at the listing at RaiseRight.com. To get Scrip you will need to create an account. If you have any questions, comments, or feedback, please contact Chris Vermeulen at cnverm@aol.com.



The R & R Team Wants YOU!

July 17 - 20, 2024



Here are the links to the 2024 SignUpGenius for Art Fair. The direct links are below, and the QR code has a hyperlink too. Any questions, please email Chris at cnverm@aol.com.

Direct Link for Hospitality sign up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B044AAEA62AA2F94-fccart4>

Direct Link for R & R sign up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B044AAEA62AA2F94-fccart5>





The First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor

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

lily@fccannarbor.org

Rev. Eric Hausman

Adjunct Minister

eric@fccannarbor.org

Jared Peterson

Office Manager

734-662-1679 ext. 113

office@fccannarbor.org

Marina Baker

Children's Ministry Coordinator

734-662-1679 ext. 110

marina@fccannarbor.org

Crystal McBride

Bookkeeper

734-662-1679 ext. 115

bookkeeper@fccannarbor.org

Terry Farmer

COP Music Director

terryfarmermusic@gmail.com

Ben Gaughran

Director of Music

ben@fccannarbor.org

Timothy L. Huth

Organist

timothyhuth@gmail.com

Joshua Marzan

Pianist

pianist@fccannarbor.org

Nancy Sauve

Congregation Liaison

nancy@fccannarbor.org

SUNDAY IN-PERSON AND LIVESREAM WORSHIP

AND CHURCH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

8:15 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 2023 / JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2024 CALENDAR

Dec 1 - 2		Men's Overnight Rotating Shelter (last 2 days)
Sunday, Dec 3		1st Sunday in Advent
	5:00 p.m.	Vocal Arts Ensemble Concert, Sanctuary
Dec 5,12,19	7:00 p.m.	TNS, Mayflower Room
Dec 5	12:15 p.m.	Good Grief Luncheon, Olive Garden
Dec 6,13,20	9:00 a.m.	Text Breakfast, Alpha Koney Diner
Dec 6,20	10:15 a.m.	Mind & Spirit, Mayflower Room
Dec 6	5:00 p.m.	Missions & Outreach Committee Meeting, Hybrid
Dec 9	9:00 a.m.	Special Music Rehearsal
Sunday, Dec 10		2nd Sunday in Advent
	10:00 a.m.	Special Music Presentation (page 9)
	11:00 a.m.	Advent Afternoon of Fun (page 9)
	4:00 p.m.	Classical Bells Christmas Concert (page 10)
Dec 16	10:00 a.m.	Tentative Christmas Pageant Rehearsal for Lead Roles
Sunday, Dec 17		3rd Sunday in Advent
	4:00 p.m.	Christmas Pageant Rehearsal
Dec 20	7:00 p.m.	COP Blue Christmas COP Worship Service (page 10)
Sunday, Dec 24		4th Sunday in Advent Christmas Eve at FCC (page 8)
Dec 25		Merry Christmas / Office Closed
Sunday, Dec 31	9:00 a.m.	NO COP - Change of Pace Service
Jan 1		Happy New Year / Office Closed
Jan 3,17	10:15 a.m.	Mind & Spirit, Mayflower Room
Jan 10,17,24,31	9:00 a.m.	Text Breakfast, Alpha Koney Diner
Sunday, Jan 7	11:00 a.m.	All-Church Un-Decorating Party and Lunch
Jan 8	7:00 p.m.	Board of Trustees Meeting
Jan 10	5:00 p.m.	Missions & Outreach Committee Meeting, Hybrid
Sunday, Jan 14	11:15 a.m.	CIC - Contemporary Issues Presentation (page 18)
Jan 15		Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
	7:00 p.m.	Church Council Meeting, Hybrid
Sunday, Jan 21	11:00 a.m.	Music Committee Meeting, Choir Room
	11:15 a.m.	Activities & Fellowship Committee Meeting, Meeting Room
Jan 25	4:00 p.m.	Building & Grounds Subcommittee Meeting, Hybrid
Sunday, Jan 28	11:00 a.m.	Board of Christian Education Meeting, Hybrid
Feb 6,13,20,27	7:00 p.m.	TNS, Mayflower Room
Feb 7,14,21,28	9:00 a.m.	Text Breakfast, Alpha Koney Diner
Feb 7,21	10:15 a.m.	Mind & Spirit, Mayflower Room
Feb 7	5:00 p.m.	Missions & Outreach Committee Meeting, Hybrid
Feb 11	11:15 a.m.	CIC - Contemporary Issues Presentation (page 18)
Feb 12	7:00 p.m.	Board of Trustees Meeting
Feb 14		Happy Valentine's Day
Feb 16,17,18,	TBD	Music in the Black Church
Sunday, Feb 18	11:00 a.m.	Music Committee Meeting, Choir Room
	11:15 a.m.	Activities & Fellowship Committee Meeting, Meeting Room
Feb 22	4:00 p.m.	Building & Grounds Subcommittee Meeting, Hybrid
Sunday, Feb 25	11:00 a.m.	Board of Christian Education Meeting, Hybrid