



THE CHURCH WINDOW

*December
2022*



FROM THE PASTOR'S KEYBOARD

Dear Ones,

Our Advent Devotional from the Still Speaking Writers Group makes an excellent point: Darkness gets bad press. I guess the reason why we think so badly of darkness makes some sense. Many of us have a primal fear of the dark, mainly because we do not know what is in it. We are afraid of what we cannot know. But that fear might be preventing us from recognizing or seeing God in the darkness. Maybe we should give darkness a second chance. Did you know, for example, that when the Israelites were wandering the desert after they had escaped from slavery in Egypt, they were instructed to make a tabernacle, or a largish tent. The center portion of the tent was blocked off from all the other sections and it was called The Holy of Holies, because God dwelled there (Exodus 26). Outside of the Holy of Holies, the priests kept lamps burning all the time. But inside, where God dwelled, it was entirely dark. God chose to dwell in darkness.

I like to think of the symbolism of God dwelling in darkness. Maybe it means that God is most often found when we feel that our world or our lives are “dark.” It is exactly at those moments when God shows up or when we can most feel God’s presence. It might mean that. Or maybe it means that God dwells in the unknowable or that God IS, ultimately, unknowable. It might mean that, too. But I like to think that it means that there is no place that isn’t holy; there is no place where God is not.

If we start to think of God as dwelling in darkness, we might start to rethink what darkness is and what it means. Before his birth, Jesus waited quietly, protected in the dark of His mother’s womb—the darkness, not a place of fear or evil, but a place of safety and burgeoning life. So when the days get shorter, greyer and darker, maybe we are getting closer to God. When the nights are long and we cannot sleep, trust that God is there, sitting awake with us. When we lose our sight, most assuredly God is there to fill our other senses. When depression weighs us down with a sense of darkness, most definitely God gently holds us. For those of you with darker skin who have been oppressed and shamed precisely because of your “darkness,” know that you are made in God’s image, beautiful and right.

So as we wait through this Advent season, let us reconsider darkness. God does dwell in light too, yes, and hope is often symbolized as light. But there is nothing that God created that isn’t inherently good and no place where God is absent. We can trust that God dwells in the darkness. Thanks be to God.

Advent and Christmas 2022

Advent is a time of waiting and of trust. As we watch the days get shorter, we wait with trust that God will surprise us with the gift of a child, Immanuel. But the hustle and bustle of the season can lead us away from the quiet reflection the season encourages. So you are invited to set aside a little time every day to read our Advent Devotional, trusting that others in the church are joining you. Devotionals are available at the back of the sanctuary after Sunday worship or through the office, suggested donation \$5.00

Here are the other happenings during this month:

Rest In the Rush: This is a time when the sanctuary is open to anyone who needs some time for prayer, reflection, or pastoral care. Stop by on your way home from school or work. Wednesdays during Advent: Nov 30, Dec 7, Dec 14, Dec 21, 5-7pm

Poinsettia Orders: Congregational Life will be taking orders for poinsettias beginning Nov 27 in the Fellowship Hall following worship. You can also order by calling the office Mon-Thu 9-1pm; \$12. We display these during worship and then ask that you take them home after Christmas.

Book Exchange/Donation: Starting on Nov 27, please bring in one new or gently used book of any kind or age range (Toddler-adult). Following a lovely Icelandic tradition, we will give these away on Christmas Day.

Opportunities for Giving: GLEAP: The Board of Outreach has adopted four families. Please bring in donations of non-perishable food items or Meijer gift cards before Dec 18. Donations of money can be made out to the church with GLEAP on the memo line. GL Food Bank Baby Jesus Tree: The Sisters of Ruth will be collecting baby items (like clothes, diapers, etc.) and donating them to the Grand Ledge Foodbank.

2nd Sunday in Advent: The Sunday of Peace 10:30 am Worship

Our Sunday morning worship service begins with a recognition that the holidays are difficult for many of us, and gives us time to lament some of our losses. We take time to light candles to express our prayers of hope (so please have candles ready for this service if you are worshipping at home) and ultimately move towards finding hope and peace in the story of Christmas.

3rd Sunday in Advent: The Sunday of Joy 10:30 am Worship

This morning's service is devoted to our children and youth. It will include a Christmas pageant and a visit from some very special guests. Please consider bringing any young ones from your lives.

Christmas Caroling: Dec 11 at 3pm we will go Christmas caroling! Please meet at the church at 3 and let Kathy Burt know if you're coming for planning purposes.

4th Sunday in Advent: The Sunday of Love 10:30 am Worship Christmas Cantata: Join us for this special musical worship service followed by a Christmas Themed Coffee Hour. If you are able, please bring a dozen of your favorite Christmas cookies (if you provide allergy friendly cookies, please provide a list of ingredients, including any sprays used on pans.)

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service: Dec 24 at 8pm

Please join us for this very special service as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, Immanuel!

Christmas Day Worship Service: Sunday, Dec 25 10:30 am

This year, Christmas falls on a Sunday! So we are holding a special service where we explore Christmas traditions from around the world. This will include Communion and the Icelandic book exchange mentioned above. You are very cordially invited to join us for this unique service of worship and celebration.

Christmas Caroling

Everyone is invited for Christmas Caroling, Sunday December 11 at 3pm!

Volunteers

With the coming of the new year, we are again looking for volunteers willing to speak on the last Sunday of each month. Many of you have shared your stories of faith or thoughts on topics of personal interest. Please consider the following dates for this year. Contact Kim Dible or Pastor Laura to sign up or concerning any questions you may have.

January 22	June 25	October 22
March 26	July 23	November 26
April 23	August 27	December 24
May 28	September 24	

Holiday Coffee Hour

We will be having a special holiday coffee hour following our Christmas Cantata on December 18th. Cookie bakers are encouraged to bring in a dozen of your best cookies to share. Please drop them off in the Fellowship Hall prior to worship.

GLEAP Christmas Baskets

We are once again collecting food to donate Christmas meals to four families whose names were provided to us by GLEAP. GLEAP is the Grand Ledge Emergency Assistance Program which provides a variety of short-term assistance to community families in need.

For many past years, our church families brought food and other useful pantry items to fill each GLEAP family box at the church during December. Please help us by bringing staples such as canned goods, and other non-perishable items and place them in the boxes by Sunday morning, December 18. If you would prefer, you are warmly invited to place gift cards (Meijer) or a check made out to FCUCC to the church or drop them in the collection plate no later than Sunday morning, December 18. Please place in an envelope marked "GLEAP Baskets". There will be small blue envelopes next to the bulletins in the narthex if you want to use that envelope on Sunday mornings for your donation. Surplus funds and gift cards will be given to GLEAP for their many winter assistance requests from families in need in the greater Grand Ledge community.

We are also looking for volunteers to "adopt a family" to shop for perishable items and deliver to their home during the week of Dec 19th. If you would like to shop and deliver to a family, please contact Ron Erskine. Look for updates in the Thursday Pause. Thank you! —Rich, Charlynn, Karen, Erica, Charlene, and Ron.

CONGREGATORS

We had such a nice November lunch talking to Joan about her upcoming special coffee hour for her 90th birthday party! We're celebrating a little early as her birthday falls just a couple of days after Christmas which can be such a busy time for families. Because fall weather has been gorgeous, we thought let's go ahead and meet the first Tuesday in December. Well, as of this writing, it's cold and snowing! So, for now, we will plan...

Tuesday, December 6, our usual 1 pm time at Sophia's. If winter stays, we may reconsider! We will be in touch a couple of days ahead of time with the 'regulars.' New friends are always welcome...this is a great way to meet others in our congregation. Let one of us know if you can attend!

Charlene (517.281.5019) or Sandy (517.420.2121)

WOMEN GATHERING OVER DEVOTIONS

Women Gathering Over Devotions (W GOD) met for the last time in 2022 on Monday, November 21, 2022. We brought our own lunch and had a social hour while we ate.. We are continuing the series of books by Will Holcomb and discussed the book, 'The Infinite Jeff, Part 2' Chapters 17 through 33.

We are not meeting in the month of December so we may spend more time with our families. There will be information regarding the January meeting in the next newsletter.

SISTERS OF RUTH

Sisters of Ruth met on November 14, 2022 at Red Robin for lunch. Our next luncheon will be December 12, 2022 at the House of Shu.

BABY JESUS TREE

During the month of December, the Sisters of Ruth will be collecting items for newborns and infants. We are asking members and friends of our church to donate new clothing, diapers, food, and all necessary baby items. We will be using the tree in the back lobby as the Baby Jesus Tree this year. All items will be given to the Grand Ledge Food Bank for babies in need in the Grand Ledge area.

Income and Expense Report

	Actual October 2022	Actual Year-to-Date	Budget Year-to-Date	Annual Budget
INCOME	\$ 9,071.72	\$134,263.62	\$109,896.67	\$131,876.00
EXPENSES	<u>14,008.22</u>	<u>123,789.56</u>	<u>125,688.33</u>	<u>152,326.00</u>
BALANCE	(\$ 4,936.50)	\$ 10,474.06	(\$ 15,791.67)	(\$ 20,450.00)

As the cold weather comes, we will have many higher expenses. Our current yearly total is still positive. With your continued support, we will stay positive this year even though our expenses will be greater.

Ways to Keep In Touch with the Church!

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uccgrandledge>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcmU3DDWy-JbJ04TgjLtgWg>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/grandledgeucc/>
<https://grandledgeucc.org/>

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES
First Congregational United Church of Christ – Grand Ledge
Executive Board Meeting Minutes October 25, 2022

Call to Order:

Moderator, Leah Horn, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Board Members present were: Charlene Avery, Gary Cypher, Kim Dible-Glasser, Ron Erskine, Lynn Hart, Karen Holcomb-Merrill, Leah Horn, Pastor Laura Miller-Purrenhage, Thea Oatman, Mary Lou Prevost and Kelly Stuible-Clark.

Excused Members:, Fay Schroeder

We began with the planned non-triangulation training presented by Pastor Laura. Triangulation is when one person goes to another person about an issue they are having with a third person with the hope that the second person will resolve the issue for them.

Spiritual Reflection:

Leah began the meeting with a prayer from the Daily Devotions written by Pastor Vickie Kemper from Massachusetts, which was based on Psalm 121: 1-2.

Open Forum: Chuck Byam was here to listen and to show the LED colored string lights with remote, which he brought that could be used behind the cross to replace the neon light that was broken when the electric company was installing the cable for the mike. When the original fans that they ordered would not work for us, they went ahead and ordered different fans from another supplier which they hope to install tomorrow (Wednesday, October 26).

Bil Turner was also present to ask the Board direction for how we wish to proceed concerning the broken light. It was decided by the Board that ultimately, it would be the electric company's responsibility to replace the light. Bil will take care of this with the electric company tomorrow. Also noted, the company has ordered the replacement cable and mike which had been broken during installation.

Consent Agenda:

There were no board reports submitted.

Pastor Laura took on the job of resolving issues with the internet. Larry met with Comcast who stated that they believe the problem we are having is because the port used to connect the two computers to the ethernet is not working. To correct this problem, David Gruner suggested that we purchase a Netgear switch for the ethernet which costs \$20 to \$40. Comcast replaced the router in the hallway which they said was old even though it had just been replaced a year ago.

All consent reports were accepted as submitted.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES (CONT.)

Action and Discussion Items:

Update of Call Agreement Language Regarding Hours of Work:

Karen updated Pastor Laura's call agreement in accordance with the decision of the Board at the September meeting, to reflect the revised 25 hour work week to accommodate her new responsibility as Chief of Staff. At the same time, it was also decided to update the language which would replace the dollar amounts for salary and housing allowance, which requires updating her call agreement every year, to indicate "the amount at a rate which would be determined by the Executive Board and the congregation based on the current year's budget".

Possible Bystander Training February, 2023 - Tabled

This item will continue to be tabled until the November meeting for further discussion.

Updated Pastor Responsibilities Discussion:

This item has been tabled until the November meeting. All Executive Board members are asked to review the Ministries of the Church list prior to the meeting.

Proposed Emergency Procedures: With the decision to lock the back door during the service, it was decided that the Executive Board would keep that door locked during its meetings and enter by using the side door directly into the fellowship hall. The choir had the same concerns and decided that they would also keep the back door lock during rehearsals.

The Board decided that we should utilize the Accident/Incident Report Form as presented. It would be used in the event of any type of injury no matter how small or any accident or incident occurring on church property, regardless of whether they are a visitor, one of the congregation or a staff member. Forms should also be provided and explained to anyone filling out the building use form. Forms should be made available in the office and/or wherever it is deemed most accessible. Ron made the motion to accept and use the form whenever any accident, injury or incident occurs and make it accessible for anyone to use. Kelly seconded. Motion carried.

The Board reviewed the draft of the Active Violence Procedures, the current Emergency Plan which is posted throughout the building, and discussed other areas such as first aid kits, taking a video of all of the rooms and equipment, periodically review our insurance coverage, and exploring possible basic first aid training through the local fire department and/or Red Cross. Discussion centered around dissemination of information to the congregation, identifying individuals or staff who would be assigned tasks in the event of an emergency such as calling 911 or directing people to the exits. Mary Lou agreed to prepare a draft procedure which would be presented to the Board for input.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES (CONT.)

Improve Webpage and Social Media Presence: Pastor Laura discussed the availability of a Vitality Award Grant which is available through the Michigan Conference. This could be used to improve our current Webpage which, in turn, could impact our social media presence. Because it would require a great deal of preparation and time to complete the grant requirements, we decided it is not feasible to pursue this at this time since the filing deadline is November 15.

This item has been tabled until next year when we may have more preparation time. Meanwhile, Kelly posts once a week on our site, but is limited because she does not receive any content such as stories, pictures, projects and news from others in the church. It was suggested to reach out to the church boards for any input they may have.

Request to Reimburse Choir Director for Personal Payment Made to a Substitute Director: Pastor Laura, in a conversation with Brandon, learned that in 2019 when Brandon had to be away, he paid, out of pocket, \$75 for a replacement. After thoroughly discussing this concern, the Board concluded that this was never brought before them, and everyone felt this should be resolved even though it was 3 years ago. Motion was made by Karen to reimburse Brandon \$75. Seconded by Charlene. Motion carried.

Job Description Revisions: A discussion concerning job descriptions centered around the need for clarification for paid time available to staff. It is thought that there may be a formula used by the Treasurer and/or which may be found in the office files, for determining this payment. Once it is ascertained, this information will be added to each of the job descriptions.

Miscellaneous Updates:

Services on December 25th: Leah reported that David Wee is available to work that day to stream the service. Not enough chancel choir members nor bell choir members are available, nor is Chuck, but Brandon will provide pre-recorded music from the choir.

Christmas Cantata during December 18 service: Brandon had put together a proposal for costs for the instrumentalists and an extra \$500 for a pianist because Chuck is not comfortable playing for the cantata. The total cost would be \$1,550. Lynn mentioned to Brandon, that in the future if he plans this type of event, he would need to request additional funds in time to be included in the budget. Resources are currently available through various funds including money remaining for the Bell Director salary which we will not be spending. These funds will offset the accompanist line item which will be over budget.

'Ceiling Fan Installation: A motion was passed at the special Board meeting of October 11, 2022 to not proceed with the installation of the fans that are not compatible with our needs. However, since that action, R & M Electric Company has found compatible fans which they expect will work. Consequently, the Board agrees to move forward with the



EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES (CONT.)

installation of these latest fans providing they will actually meet our needs.

Parking Lot Repair E-Mail Vote: Thanks to Gary for his initiative, the repairs to the driveway entrance and the trenched portion, which was due to the electrical replacement for the sign, were completed effective October 20, 2022. The expenditure of \$850 to Grand Ledge Paving was approved via e-mail vote taken on October 19, 2022.

Parking Lot Lighting Repair: Thanks to Leah's husband who replaced the parking lot's double LED light which was out.

At this time, the Board went into a closed session to discuss personnel concerns.

The next Board meeting will be Tuesday, November 15, at 6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Mary Lou Prevost, Church Clerk

THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

Just as individual prayer time is very important to each of us, so is **prayer as a faith community**. We invite you to call the **church office at 627-2336** to notify the pastor of any prayer concerns you would like to share.



Health concerns: Pray for family and friends with health concerns and those who have the Coronavirus.

Those who are struggling be it: financially, mentally, spiritually, individually, or collectively.

Those in a time of transition or turmoil.

Those who serve: soldiers, teachers, police officers, firefighters, counselors, public servants, our congregational leaders, politicians, and many more.

Prayer request: Please pray for those affected by the Coronavirus as well as all those on our prayer list: Darlene B., Corey, Kaleb, Beth P., Doris B., Lili B., Kathy H., Cindy G., Carole S., Barbara N., Geri L., Robert E., Larry and Carol S., Marty S, Maryann, Patricia R., Sarah B., Jenna P., Ron, Katy R, Sue C., Caieya C., Ashley R., Eric, Heather and their families, Lee W., Dan B., Phillip C., Ann E., and Denny E. *In being consistent with the HIPAA Law and people's privacy, we only list individuals with their explicit permission and no last names. During worship, please do not use personal identifiable information for others when asking for prayers.*

December 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 10am AA Women
4 10:30am In-Person and Facebook Worship Service The Sunday of Peace	5 6:30PM Grand Ringers Practice	6 Congregators meetings, 1pm at Sophias	7 6pm AA 7:30pm AI-Anon 8pm AA Rest in the rush 5-7pm	8 6pm Chancel Choir Practice	9	10 10am AA Women
11 9:00 Christian Ed Meeting 10:30am In-Person and Facebook Worship Service The Sunday of Joy Christmas Caroling 3pm	12 6:30PM Grand Ringers Practice Sisters of Ruth, 12:30pm - House of Shu	13	14 6pm AA 7:30pm AI-Anon 8pm AA Rest in the rush 5-7pm	15 6pm Chancel Choir Practice	16	17 10am AA Women
18 10:30am In-Person and Facebook Worship Service The Sunday of Love	19 6:30PM Grand Ringers Practice	20 6:30pm Executive Board Meeting	21 6pm AA 7:30pm AI-Anon 8pm AA Rest in the rush 5-7pm	22 Office Closed due to Thanksgiving Holiday.	23	24 10am AA Women Christmas Eve Worship Service 8pm
25 10:30am In-Person and Facebook Worship Service Christmas Day Worship Service	26 6:30PM Grand Ringers Practice	27	38 6pm AA 7:30pm AI-Anon 8pm AA	29	30	31 10am AA Women

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

DATE	December 4	December 11	December 18	December 24	December 25
THEME	Finding Peace in the Story	Children's Pageant	Love	Christmas Eve	Christmas Day
TEXT		Isaiah 35:1-10		Isaiah 9:2-7 Luke 2:1-20 & John 1:1-5	Psalm 98 Matthew 1:18-25
HEAD USHER	Kathy Burt	Bil Turner	Chris Cypher		
GREETER	Gary Burt	Fay Schroeder	Gary Cypher		
LITURGIST	Freida Schneeberger, Leah Horn	Anita Calcagno	Marcia Kent		
SOUNDBOARD	Julie Wilkinson	Charlynn Walker	Julie Wil- kinson	Charlynn Walker	
VIRTUAL COORDINATOR	David Wee	David Wee	David Wee	David Wee	
HYMN SINGER	Choir	Choir	Choir	Choir	



December BIRTHDAYS

Eli Tanasse	12th
Renee Pier	15th
Ron Erskine	17th
Philip Clark	25th
Bil Tanasse	27th
Joan Perry	27th
Nicole Mai	28th
Kim Dible	30th



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First Congregational UCC Mission Statement		
<i>Following Jesus, our mission is to serve God by building an inclusive community where uplifting worship and relevant messages deepen spirituality and inspire acts of justice, service, and compassion.</i>		
PASTOR'S KEYBOARD	1	<p style="text-align: center;">STAFF</p> <p>Rev. Dr. Laura Miller-Purrenhage Larry Patterson Office Administrator Brandon Frost, Choir Director Carol Orsborn, Bell Choir Director Chuck Byam, Organist & Accompanist Rev. Demphna Krikorian, Christian Educator Ben Sackett, Custodian Rev. John Baumgartner, Pastor Emeritus</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS & BOARD CHAIRS</p> <p>Leah Horn, Moderator Karen Holcomb-Merrill, Vice Moderator Mary Lou Prevost, Clerk Fay Schroeder, Treasurer Lynn Hart, Financial Secretary Charlene Avery, Member-at-Large Thea Oatman, Member-at-Large Gary Cypher, Member-at-Large Kelly Stuible-Clark, Christian Education Kim Dible, Congregational Life</p>
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