



THE CHURCH WINDOW

*January
2022*



FROM THE PASTOR'S KEYBOARD

Dear Ones,

January is an interesting month in the life of the church. The season of Christmas ends on Jan 6th, when we celebrate Epiphany—the day we celebrate when the wise ones found and worshipped Jesus. The season of Epiphany then lasts for almost two months, ending with the Sunday when we celebrate Jesus' transfiguration. So what are we doing throughout the season? What is the purpose of celebrating it? The day of Epiphany, itself, is meant to celebrate the manifestation of God among us. When we think of the word “epiphany” now, we probably think of its common usage—an “aha” moment or a sudden realization. For the wise ones, finding Jesus was not exactly an “aha” moment. They had traveled miles and miles to find him, knowing that the new star in the skies was guiding them to him. So can we really call it an “aha moment” when they found him? I would imagine it might have been more like a “well, it’s about time” moment. Imagine them, traveling hundreds, if not thousands of miles. Imagine them entering the Roman empire, a state where somewhere between ¼ and 1/3 of all its people were enslaved and poverty was rampant. Imagine them coming across Herod, but sensing that he is a cruel, tyrannical man who will do anything to keep his power. Their’s was a world where it would be hard to experience hope. Yet even in the midst of that world, after all their travel, the wise ones did experience awe upon finding the Christ child. It wasn’t a “well, it’s about time” moment, but an actual epiphanic moment. Imagine them falling on their knees, giving their gifts, and worshipping!

I think that’s the challenge before us this Epiphany season, to really look for, and allow ourselves to be surprised and awed by, the way that Jesus manifests amongst us now. We know that we will find Jesus this year, just as we have done every year. The weather is so grim in Michigan in January, the pandemic weighs heavily on us, and we have so many worries for our world. It can be hard to find actual manifestations of Jesus here, let alone be awed by him. So where is our “aha” moment?

The scripture readings throughout the season are focused on Jesus’s identity, trying to help us see him working and living in our world now. So I encourage you, this month, to listen closely to the scripture lessons and think about who they are saying Jesus is. Can they help you find your “aha moment”—a time when you suddenly see the divine before you and are encouraged to fall down and worship? Let us start by entering this season as the wise ones did, with curiosity, with hope, with a heart searching for the divine.

Blessings, Pastor Laura

CONGREGATORS

We will be watching Covid numbers following Christmas gatherings and weather trends as we move into real winter and contemplate getting together for lunch in January. In the meantime, we wish all of you a Happy New Year with good health and a peaceful spirit! We will be in touch about a lunch get together!

Jim (517.627.7968), Sandy (517.420.2121) or Charlene (517.281.5019)

SISTERS OF RUTH (SOR)

Sisters of Ruth will meet for lunch on Monday, January 10, 2022 at 1:00 at a restaurant to be determined. Hopefully, we can meet this month as December's lunch was cancelled since so many couldn't attend. Watch the Thursday Pause for the restaurant.

Baby Jesus Tree

Again, this year the Sisters of Ruth collected items for newborns and infants throughout the month of December. As this is being written, there are wonderful gifts under the Baby Jesus Tree. Thank you for your generous gifts. All items will be given to the Grand Ledge Food Bank for babies in need in the Grand Ledge area. We will give an update in next month's newsletter.

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., Anna C., Sandy S., Marty S, Maryann, Patricia R., Sarah B., Stacy S., Jenna P., Ron, Katy R, Sue C., Caieya C., Ashley R., Eric, Heather and their families, Lee W., Dan B., Phillip C., and Shirley B.

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.

Welcome the Stranger: An Interfaith Service of Song and Story

The Interfaith Clergy Association of Greater Lansing will revive its annual interfaith service on Monday, February 7, at 7 p.m., at The Peoples Church. The theme of the service is "Welcome the Stranger." We will offer scriptures and songs from many faiths that emphasize the importance of welcoming and tending to newcomers in our midst. Members of the recently arrived Afghan community will share stories of faith, and Judi Harris, director of Refugee Services for St. Vincent Catholic Charities, will share updates about the return of refugees to our area.

All are welcome to gather as a community of many different faiths, but one single community of friendship and mutual respect. You can attend in person, or watch the livestream at <https://tinyurl.com/yc4udz9f>

WOMEN GATHERING OVER DEVOTIONS (WGOD)

Women Gathering Over Devotions (WGOD) is changing our meeting time. We are going to meet at noon on January 17, 2022 for our next WGod book discussion. We will be discussing "In Sickness and In Health" by Rev. Barbara Edema from the beginning through Chapter 10. This is the fifth book in the Pastor Maggie series. You may purchase the book through Amazon either in paperback or as an ebook.

If you have any questions, contact Fay Schroeder at fschroeder4200@yahoo.com or (517) 627-2727.



January BIRTHDAYS

Jeannette Len	4th	Kelly Stuible-Clark	17th
John Schneeberger	4th	Fay Schroeder	21st
Kathy Burt	7th	May Clark	21st
Jim Johnson	9th	Robin Horn	22nd
Matt Cypher	9th	Quinn McWilliams	28th
Ben Walther	10th	Karen Holcomb Merrill	29th
Dashal Jason Gooley	10th	Caleb Pier	31st
Leah Horn	13th	Sheila Wilkinson	31st
Tony Bray	16th		
Chad Frost	16th		

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES
First Congregational United Church of Christ – Grand Ledge
Executive Board Meeting Minutes October 26, 2021

Call to Order

Vice Moderator Karen Holcomb-Merrill called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

This meeting was held over Zoom due to Covid-19 virus distancing recommendations. Some members attended by telephone.

Board Members present: Karen Holcomb-Merrill, Pastor Laura, Charlene Avery, Lisa Reed, Fay Schroeder, Chris Cypher, Chris Clark, Kim Dible Glasser and Bil Turner.

Spiritual Reflection

Pastor Laura read from a recent UCC meditation on those who choose not to take the Covid vaccine, and led the group in a prayer.

Open Forum No one was present for this item.

Consent Agenda The Consent Agenda was accepted.

Action and Discussion Items

Pastor's Report

Pastor Laura reported that much her time this month has been used in Worship planning and pastoral care. There have also been several meetings outside of the UCC: the Grand Ledge book club discussions and the GL Area Ministerial Assn. She is still about eleven hours over the appropriate time for the month.

Personnel Update

David Gruner has created a set of questions that are appropriate for an interview for the Video Tech Position. It was noted that it is difficult pulling together a qualified interview team for this position.

Facilities Update

The boiler has been repaired.

Stewardship Campaign.

No current report on pledges received. Fay reported that the second letter will go out next Monday.

Proposed Budget

The proposed budget for 2022 is available, with the exception of salaries. All expense line items were discussed by the Finance Committee. The proposed budget should be adopted by the Executive Board in December.

Website and YouTube updates.

Larry is studying linking our website to the streaming service. Pastor Laura is asking for help with YouTube issues.

Vanco/EFT update. No new information at this time.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES continued

Board and Committee duties.

Fay will look for a notebook that was previously prepared detailing Board and Committee duties.

Nominating Committee. Bil confirmed he has agreed to help.

New Credit Card Opportunity from Fifth Third Bank. Fay reported that 5/3 has a credit card for small businesses that appears much more advantageous than our present card from Mutual of Omaha. After discussion, moved by Lisa, seconded by Charlene that Fay, Leah and Karen complete the research and they are empowered to decide to apply for that new credit card. Those same three will be allowed to use the card. Motion passed.

New Business

Drop Box. Our Drop Box capacity is full, primarily due to music and Moments of Centering videos that are stored there. We can buy a larger subscription or buy an external hard drive. The external hard drive seems much more economical. The decision was made for Kelli and Larry to discuss what size hard drive to purchase, to ask Larry to purchase it and download those large files from Drop Box.

Covid Increase. Pastor Laura spoke about the recent increase in Michigan Covid cases. She asked if we want to make any changes in our approach to Worship Services. The consensus was that we do not want to make any changes now.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM

The next Executive Board Meeting will be Tuesday, December 28, 2021 at 6:30 PM. Manner of the meeting to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,
Bil Turner, Church Clerk



INCOME AND EXPENSE REPORT

	Actual November 2021	Actual Year-to-Date	Budget Year-to-Date	Annual Budget
INCOME	\$11,146.00	\$131,671.12	\$124,404.50	\$135,714.00
EXPENSES	<u>12,656.45</u>	<u>113,041.94</u>	<u>131,824.25</u>	<u>144,681.00</u>
BALANCE	(\$ 1,510.45)	\$ 18,629.18	(\$ 7,419.75)	(\$ 8,967.00)

Our boiler is of concern and has several maintenance calls. The members and friends of our church have been generous throughout this year. With no services for the first half, you succeeded in donating enough to get very much needed technical equipment so that we can continue on-line services. The future of our wonderful church relies on all of us with our stewardship of money, time, and talents.

WONDERFUL!! WITH YOUR HELP, WE SURPASSED OUR GOAL FOR GLEAP CHRISTMAS FOOD!!

WE CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH!! As you always do, with so much love and generosity, you gave \$1,520 in cash and gift cards. We converted enough cash to buy additional Meijer gift cards so we gave our four families a little more than originally planned, \$900 instead of \$800, according to family size. The balance of \$620 will be sent to GLEAP which is in the midst of incoming requests for short term, winter emergency assistance for help with food, utility bills, water bills, gas for cars, and many other needs.

We also want to tell you how much gratitude was expressed as we delivered the gift cards and fruit boxes to our four families. We tucked in a Christmas card from our church, mentioning GLEAP, so they knew where the gifts came from...YOU!!

Thank you again so very much from the bottom of our hearts!! ...Charlene, Chris, Sandy, Charlyn and Karen

Souper Bowl of Caring

Our annual Souper Bowl of Caring event, led by the youth of our church, will take place on Super Bowl Sunday, February 6, 2022.

After church that day, our young people will hold soup pots in the narthex and on the front porch, to collect funds for Grand Ledge Food Bank.

This is our simple way to help tackle hunger here in Grand Ledge.

The Food Bank can make \$1 go a long way to help feed families.

So remember this date and come to church or drive by and drop some money in a soup pot.

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

DATE	Jan. 2	Jan. 9	Jan. 16	Jan. 23	Jan. 30
THEME	Jesus, the Light of the World	Epiphany			Jesus' Love
TEXT	Sirach 24:1-12 John 1:1-18	Psalm 72:1-7 & 10-14 Matthew 2:1-1			Jeremiah 1:4-10 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
HEAD USHER					
GREETER					
LITURGIST					
SOUNDBOARD					
VIRTUAL COORDINATOR					
HYMN SINGER					



January 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 New Years Day 10am AA Women
2 10:30am In-Person and Facebk Worship Service	3	4	5 6pm AA 7:30pm Al-Anon 8pm AA	6 7- 8:30 pm Choir Practice 8pm AA	7	8 10am AA Women
9 10:30am In-Person and Facebk Worship Service	10 1:00 p..m. Sisters of Ruth	11	12 6pm AA 7:30pm Al-Anon 8pm AA	13 5:00 p.m—7:00 p.m. Rest In Rush Church Sanctuary 7-8:30 pm Choir Practice 8pm AA	14	15 10am AA Women
16 10:30am In-Person and Facebk Worship Service	17 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Office Closed WGOD Meeting 1:00 p.m.	18	19 6pm AA 7:30pm Al-Anon 8pm AA	20 8pm AA	21	22
23 10:30am In-Person and Facebk Worship Service	24	25 6:30 p.m. Execu- tive Board Meet- ing	26	27	28	29

CHURCH INSTAGRAM

Our church now has an Instagram account! If you do, too, then please follow us!



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 Emergency Contact 517-374-0145
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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	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50%;">STAFF</td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50%;">EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS & BOARD CHAIRS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rev. Dr. Laura Miller-Purrenhage</td> <td>Leah Horn, Moderator</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Larry Patterson Office Administrator</td> <td>Karen Holcomb-Merrill, Vice Moderator</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brandon Frost, Choir Director</td> <td>Bil Turner, Clerk</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Darlene Banks, Bell Choir Director</td> <td>Fay Schroeder, Treasurer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chuck Byam, Organist</td> <td>Lynn Hart, Financial Secretary</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rev. Demphna Krikorian, Christian Educator</td> <td>Charlene Avery, Member-at-Large</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ben Sackett, Custodian</td> <td>Kim Dible, Member-at-Large</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nicole Finney, Nursery Care Provider</td> <td>Lisa Reed, Member-at-Large</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rev. John Baumgartner, Pastor Emeritus</td> <td>Thea Oatman, Christian Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Chris Cypher & Kim Dible, Congregational Life</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Chris Clark, Christian Outreach</td> </tr> </table>	STAFF	EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS & BOARD CHAIRS	Rev. Dr. Laura Miller-Purrenhage	Leah Horn, Moderator	Larry Patterson Office Administrator	Karen Holcomb-Merrill, Vice Moderator	Brandon Frost, Choir Director	Bil Turner, Clerk	Darlene Banks, Bell Choir Director	Fay Schroeder, Treasurer	Chuck Byam, Organist	Lynn Hart, Financial Secretary	Rev. Demphna Krikorian, Christian Educator	Charlene Avery, Member-at-Large	Ben Sackett, Custodian	Kim Dible, Member-at-Large	Nicole Finney, Nursery Care Provider	Lisa Reed, Member-at-Large	Rev. John Baumgartner, Pastor Emeritus	Thea Oatman, Christian Education		Chris Cypher & Kim Dible, Congregational Life		Chris Clark, Christian Outreach
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