

*Thank you to each one who
donated poinsettias to help
make our sanctuary a lovely
place in which to celebrate our
Lord's birth.*

W.H. Black in memory of Carol Black.
Jack & Mary Butterick in memory of our parents & other loved ones.
Brad & Stacey Church in memory of Jerry & JoAnn Church.
John & Gail Cooper in memory of family.
Ruth Cowles in memory of Jeff Oberlin.
Pat & Robin Dekleva in memory of Howard & Mary Pikel and John &
JoAnn Dekleva.
Tony & Carrie DeMull in memory of my father.
Robin & Glenn Dickmann in memory of Evelyn & William Malone,
Bill Malone & Karen Wilson.
Arnie & Betty Dougan in memory of loved ones.
Peter & Nancy Lindner in memory of our parents.
Dean & Jean Morehouse in memory of Jack Trowbridge & Sally
Morehouse Judson.
Luke & Karla Pfeiffer in memory of Sandra & Stan Pfeiffer.
Barb & Larry Ross in memory of our dear sister, Ann.
Jim Rynberg in memory of Lila & John Rynberg and David & John H.
Rynberg.
Pastor Luke & Crystal Schmalz in memory of Rev. Michael Schmalz.
Lyle & Holly Shepherd & family, Dianne & Frank Force & family in
memory of Shirley Brooks.
Dave & Linda White in memory of parents & loved ones.

Jack & Mary Butterick in honor of Lorene Witte.
Brad & Stacey Church in honor of family & friends.
Tony & Carrie DeMull in honor of my grandchildren.
Arnie & Betty Dougan in honor of family.
Pat Krehn in honor of my family who bring me great joy!
Kelly Parks & family, Holly & Lyle Shepherd & family, Stacey & Brad
Church & family in honor of Arnie & Betty Dougan.
Jim Rynberg in honor of London Walker & Watson Wuebben.
Jeff & Susan Stewart in honor of Jack & Fran Stewart.

The First Congregational Church

Your Independent Worship Center



FOURTH SUNDAY OF
ADVENT



December 21, 2025

The Order of Worship
****please stand, if you are able***

Prelude Lorene Witte

Announcements

Welcome

Lighting of the Advent Candle - Call to Worship

Pastor: Hear the prophet speak of our Hope.

(Zephaniah 3:14-17) Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing

All: Praise God for giving us the Light of the World.

Advent Song with Carrie DeMull

Opening Prayer

***Opening - "O Come All Ye Faithful" - Blue Hymnal #249**

Scripture

Isaiah 7:10-16, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, Matthew 1:18-24

Reader: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

Skit - "Old Time Juggler" - Mat & Friends

Reflection/Message: Pastor Luke Schmalz
"Hope for a Sign"

Prayers of the Congregation

The Lord's Prayer (words projected)

***Doxology (As the offering is brought forward)**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen

***Prayer of Dedication**

***Hymn of Preparation - "Of the Father's Love Begotten - Blue Hymnal #240 vs 1**

Prayer of Confession

All: O promised Christ: We are a world at war. Our peace depends on your coming. We are a sinful people. Our pardon depends on your coming. We are full of good intentions but weak at keeping promises; our only hope of doing God's will is that you should come and help us do it. Lord Christ, Word made flesh, our world waits for your peace, for your pardon, and for your grace. Even so: come, Lord Jesus Amen.

Prayer

Pastor: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who in his great mercy has promised forgiveness of sins to all those who sincerely repent and with true faith turn to him, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Pastor: The good news of this Advent season is forgiveness of sin and new life. Let us commit our lives to Christ's way of hope and peace.

All: Thanks be to the Advent God, who comes among us, setting us free to love and serve.

Sacrament of Holy Communion - (see litany on screen or in bulletin)

Music During Communion-"Let Us Break Bread Together - Group of Singers

***Sending Hymn - "Go, Tell It On the Mountain" - Blue Hymnal #258
- Led by Skit Performers**

***Benediction** Pastor Luke Schmalz

Pastor: Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope." May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

***The Peace of Christ**

Pastor: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

***Sending**

Pastor Luke Schmalz

***Postlude**

Lorene Witte

Altar Rep: Jack Butterick

Greeting us today: Ted Caris

Next Sunday: Brian Webb

Song Leaders: A Group of Singers

Scripture Reader:

Next Sunday:

Tech Booth - Thank you volunteers! Robin, Kendra, Jeff

Happy Birthday to ~

Don McKivitz, Suzanne VandenBelt(22)

Happy Anniversary to ~

Prayer Requests ~

Duane VanDuzen - medical concerns

This Weeks Calendar

Sunday, December 21 - *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

10:00 a.m. Worship & Communion and a Skit

11:15 a.m. Fellowship Hour - Fellowship Hall

Monday, December 22

9:30 a.m. Men's Coffee Time - Fellowship Hall

10:00 a.m. Woodshop Open - when two or three are gathered

Tuesday, December 23 - *Church Office Closed*

Wednesday, December 24 - **Christmas Eve**

9:30 a.m. Men's Coffee Time - Fellowship Hall

10:00 a.m. Woodshop Open - when two or three are gathered

6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service - sanctuary

Thursday, December 25 - *Church Office Closed*

Friday, December 26 - *Church Office Closed*

9:30 a.m. Men's Coffee Time - Fellowship Hall

10:00 a.m. Woodshop Open - when two or three are gathered

Saturday, December 27

Sunday, December 28

10:00 a.m. Worship - Noisy Offering

11:15 a.m. Fellowship Hour - Fellowship Hall

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

- December 24 -

6:30 p.m.



Our Church News

On this last Sunday of Advent we happily reach out to all who have come to approach the throne of Grace. Christmas will be truly Christmas when we center our minds on the Christ child who came to offer the world salvation and hope.

Today's "Old Time Juggler" skit includes alphabetically...Leslie Anderson, Scott Crandell, Mat Emerick, Thad Hofheinz, Lori Hough, Grant McDonnell, Dan Price and David Vandenbelt. You have to figure out who's who! But wait! Don't forget Azzy Clayton & Norah Schmalz! The skit is an emotionally moving story is based on an ancient Medieval legend of a little old juggler who gives the biggest performance of his life for the One who gave the biggest gift of His Life for us all. Today's presentation is dedicated to the memory of Deb Emerick and her brother Terry Price...both in the original String Bean String Band.

Noisy Offering ... will be next Sunday, December 28. Please bring your spare change. Your \$337 contribution on December 7th in support of Newaygo County Church Alliance aiding our neighbors who are 'down and out' is wonderful. Our contributions on December 28 will be greatly appreciated, too. Thank you and Merry Christmas. Charitable Giving/jb

Offering Envelopes for 2026 are available on the table by the office. They are marked with your name. If you would like a box of envelopes for giving please let Lorene know.

The Sound Booth is looking for volunteer help with operating the sound board or running the projector. If you are interested and willing talk with Pastor Luke or Jeff Stewart.

January 4, Sunday, the congregation is asked to bring 2 dozen cookies to church and leave them in the kitchen. Pat Krehn's Small Group would like to start out 2026 by showing appreciation to groups of people in our community that go above and beyond to help others in need. Men's Fellowship will deliver them. If you can't bring cookies on Sunday drop them off on Monday. We will start with: Fire Department, Police Department, Ambulance, School Bus Garage, Post Office, City Hall.



Members & Friends - Mark your calendar - New Year Celebration Pancake Breakfast - Saturday, January 10, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. Attendance is very important as we plan for the New Year. FREE!

The Tuesday Small Group meeting at the home of Pat Krehn will be meeting at 10:00 a.m. on January 13 and 27.

Communion Liturgy

Pastor: John 6:35 - Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

We have confessed our sins and been forgiven.

We have heard the word of God and proclaimed our faith.

God has invited us to this table to receive his good gifts.

Let us praise him.

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is right, our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

**All: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Pastor: Hear the Gospel: 1 Peter 2:24-25 "Jesus himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds we have been healed. For we were going astray like sheep, but now we have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls."

All: Christ has Died, Christ is Risen, Christ will Come again!

Pastor: Heavenly Father, Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

The Words of Institution - 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it (break bread) and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood (raise cup). Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The Gifts of God for the People of God (People Called Forward)

The body of Christ broken for you

The blood of Christ shed for you

Final Prayer:

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery
in which you have given yourself to us.
Grant that we may go into the world
in the strength of your Spirit,
to give ourselves for others,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen