

The Carillon January, 2026



First Congregational Church
Your Independent Worship Center
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Executive Council Minutes - there was no December meeting.

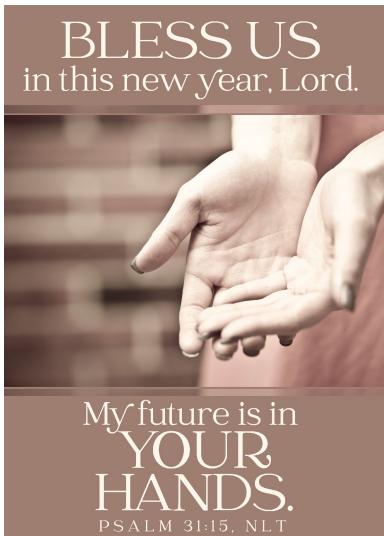
Future Focused for 2026 - Pastor Luke

I have a strange relationship with New Year's. I resolutely do not celebrate in any way. And yet I am a big fan of New Year's resolutions, reflecting on the year past, and themes for the coming year. Something about that tick to the next year makes it a meaningful time to look back, forward, and reflect. All this even though other times in the year would make more sense, particularly Advent. But here I am reflecting on my New Year's resolutions and the ups and downs of the last year. As I reflect on the past year of the Church, I am very pleased. We had a wonderful celebration of our Anniversary and reaffirmed our deep roots in Fremont, God, and the Christian community. But our motto doesn't end with deep roots. We strive to be deeply rooted and future-focused. As I look to 2026, it should be the year of future focus.

Just as we spent last year reflecting on the previous 150 years, we will spend this year reflecting on the next 150 years, asking what we need to do to be a church that continues to fulfill its mission 150 years from now. What should we do so that First Congregational Church is in Fremont, preaching the gospel, giving the sacraments, worshiping God, and loving our community? To do this, we will build on what we learned about our identity, strengths, and weaknesses over the year.

There are two main areas that we will need to work on going forward. The first is spiritual growth. The process of growing in Holiness is always an ongoing thing. We are to pursue being Christlike, and that takes constant growth. If only to wrestle with our inner desire not follow Christ. Through worship, prayer, the sacraments, and bible study, we are formed in the image of Christ, and how we interact with the world begins to reflect his character. This is what it means to be a disciple of Christ and is the mission of the church.

The second area flows out of our growth as disciples of Christ. As we start to reflect Christ in greater and greater ways, we begin to do what he did. Namely, we take the good news of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. We can do this in different



ways, from preaching to caring for the needy. But it always means sharing the good news. Telling others, look at this wonderful thing I have found! You can find it too! It can be as simple as an invite to church or sitting down for coffee and really listening to the friend.

Building a church that lasts for another 150 years is a lot of work and can be complicated. But I can't think of a better mission to dedicate one's life to. The foundation of that work is spiritual growth and mission. If we do these two things, no matter what happens, we will have fulfilled God's calling for First Congregational church. Let's have a great 2026 building God's Kingdom!

Christmas Crafts

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Women's Fellowship Events and the Craft Sale throughout the year. Your dedication—whether attending weekly sessions, assisting in the Wood Shop, or supporting the day event was essential to our success. We are grateful for your expertise and teamwork, which helped us overcome challenges and achieve excellent results. The Craft Sale generated \$1,203.50 from Plum Pudding sales and \$4,545.52 from craft sales, for a total of \$5749.02.



As we begin the new year, we look forward to preparing for our next Christmas Craft Sale on Saturday, December 5, 2026. All are welcome to attend our Thursday craft sessions from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Your continued involvement is appreciated.

Gail Cooper



Offering Envelopes:

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

Volunteers:

The Sound Booth is looking for volunteer help with operating the sound board or running the projector (the projector is all set to go - you just need to advance the slides at the appropriate time) for worship. If you are interested and willing talk with Pastor Luke or Jeff Stewart.





Noisy Offering:

Thanks to YOU, we achieved our goal of contributing \$500 to the newly formed Newaygo County Church Alliance fund. The fund is coordinated by True North with money held at FCC until needed. Recipients are neighbors who have fallen through the cracks. Well done, FCC! Charitable Giving/jb

Men's Fellowship Luncheon:

Wednesday, January 7 - Men's Fellowship Luncheon - 12:00 noon. Men (and ladies) are invited to join us for a lunch prepared by Pastor Luke, a devotional by Jack Butterick and speaker, Carmen Faulkner with the TRU North Engage program.

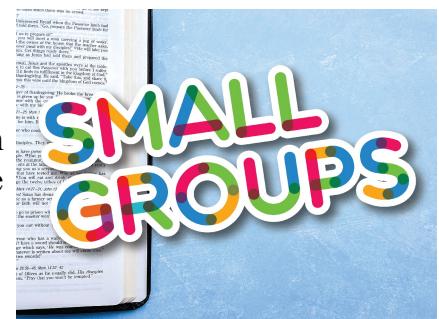


Members & Friends:

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!

Small Group:

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



Reminder to New Board & Committee Secretary/Chairs:

New Board & Committee Secretary/Chairs - be sure to include the office email in your emailing of agendas & minutes (congo@fremontfcc.org) so they can be kept on file.

Thank you Cookie Bakers!! We were able to deliver 552 Cookies in appreciation to local community groups.



Dates to Note:

January 1 - New Year's Day - church office closed
January 2 - Church offices closed
January 4 - Worship and Communion - 10:00 a.m.
January 4 - Deacon's meeting - 11:30 a.m.
January 5 - Women's Fellowship Board Meeting - 10:00 a.m.
January 7 - Men's Fellowship Lunch - 12:00 noon
January 10 - FREE Pancake Breakfast - All church members - 9:00 a.m.
January 11 - Worship - 10:00 a.m.
January 12 - Tech Board - 6:30 p.m.
January 13 - Small Group at Pat Krehn's - 10:00 a.m.
January 18 - Worship and Communion - 10:00 a.m.
January 21 - Trustees Meeting - 1:30 p.m.
January 23 - Funeral Service for Duane VanDuzen 11:00 a.m.
January 25 - Worship - 10:00 a.m.
January 26 - Executive Council - 6:30 p.m.
January 27 - Small Group at Pat Krehn's - 10:00 a.m.

M/W/F - Men's Coffee 9:30 a.m.

M/W/F - Woodshop open 10:00 a.m. when two or more are gathered

Thursday - Christmas Crafters - 10:00 a.m.



Our Church Family:

Health Concerns ~

Jim Rynberg is currently hospitalized with some health issues.
We pray for those who are battling cancer, flu, grief and loneliness.



Sympathy ~

We extend our sympathy to Loretta VanDuzen and families as they grieve the loss of Duane VanDuzen.

Thank you ~

Pastor Luke and Lorene sincerely thank you for the generous Christmas gift we received. We are grateful and blessed to be a part of the First Congregational Church.



Duane Verne VanDuzen, a beloved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, educator, and community leader, peacefully passed away on December 24, 2025, at the age of 97. Born in Detroit, Michigan, Duane's life was a radiant testament to love, service, and dedication.

Duane spent his formative years in Belding, eventually finding his niche in Fremont, where he planted deep roots and influenced countless lives. He served the community passionately as a charter member of the Fremont Lions Club, imprinting his kindness and vision throughout the area. His dedication also extended to the civic domain, where Duane dutifully served on the Fremont City Commission.

His illustrious career in education began in 1949 and spanned nearly four decades, culminating in a well-earned retirement in 1988 from Fremont Public Schools. During his tenure, Duane held the esteemed office of President of Michigan School Business Officials and was an active member since 1964. Forever planting the seeds of education and wisdom, he also had the remarkable distinction of coaching Fremont High School football to an undefeated season in 1957, earning himself a place in the Fremont High School Sports Hall of Fame.

In addition to his leadership roles in education, Duane was a dedicated member of the First Congregational Church of Fremont, where he served as Moderator and was part of the Board of Trustees. An enthusiastic woodworker, Duane devoted many hours to building shelves for the church library and the minister's office, enriching his faith in the community with both skill and craftsmanship.

Duane is survived by Loretta VanDuzen, his devoted wife of Fremont, MI; his children, Duane A. (Judy) VanDuzen, Jane E. (Mark K., DO) Olgaard, Cheryl A. VanDuzen, and David L. VanDuzen; stepdaughters Kristen (Brad) Sleeth and Michele Porter. His bounteous family tree includes his cherished grandchildren, Ericka Olgaard, D.O., Kristin (Brian) Olgaard, Catherine (Fausto) Chavez, Nicole (Jacek) Wojciechowski, Vanessa VanDuzen, and Adam VanDuzen, as well as precious great-grandchildren Selene Mae Chavez, Piper Kaylee Wojciechowski, Katy VanDuzen, and Israel VanDuzen. His loss also touches step-grandchildren Xander and Trace Williams.

Duane was predeceased by his parents, Verne L. VanDuzen, MD and Ellen VanDuzen, and his first wife, Helen VanDuzen, united in marriage on August 6, 1949, until her passing on August 10, 2002, his caring brother and sister-in-law Keith Rex and BarbaraI (Outman) VanDuzen and a loving sister Jean Livingston VanDuzen, MD.

Family and friends will honor Duane's life and enduring legacy on Friday, January 23, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. with a memorial service at the First Congregational Church of Fremont with a one hour visitation prior, officiated by Luke Schmalz. Prior to the service, a visitation will be held on Thursday, January 22, 2026, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

at Crandell Funeral Homes Inc. in Fremont, MI.

The VanDuzen family invites contributions to the First Congregational Church of Fremont or Newaygo County Compassion Home in Duane's memory and honor.

Duane's impactful journey, caring heart, and resolute spirit remain embedded in the hearts of his family, community, and the many generations inspired by his mentoring and teaching.

January Birthdays

2	Glenn Dickmann
14	Nathan McKivitz
15	Lauren Stroschin
21	Mat Emerick
22	Fran Stewart
29	Barbara Blass-Frisbey



January Anniversaries

29	Jack & Mary Butterick
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Scripture Keys to a Joyful New Year

Hold fast to your faith (Hebrews 4:14)

Assemble with the saints (Hebrews 10:25)

Pray earnestly every day (1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18)

Pray for great blessings (Malachi 3:10)

Yield not to temptation (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

Ne neglect not your talents and opportunities (Galatians 6:10)

Examine yourself daily (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Work diligently for the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Yield your members to righteousness (Romans 6:11,16)

Exercise yourself in godliness (1 Timothy 4:7)

Aim at sinless perfection (Hebrews 6:1)

Redeem the time (Ephesians 5:15, 16)



- Gus Nichols

