



# The Carillon

## February, 2026

First Congregational Church  
Your Independent Worship Center  
714 Hillcrest Drive - Fremont MI 49412  
231-924-4710  
congo@fremontfcc.org ~ [www.fremontfcc.org](http://www.fremontfcc.org)

### THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES



JANUARY 26, 2026  
DRAFT

Present: Stacy Church – Moderator, Pastor Luke Schmalz, Carrie De Mull – Clerk, Jean Morehouse – Board of Charitable Giving, Bill Black – Trustees, Carrie DeMull – Deacon's, Jack Stewart – Technology Board, Jean Morehouse – Women's Fellowship  
Non-Board Member Attendee: Dean Morehouse, Judy Nadeau

I. Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm. Stacy gave the opening prayer.

II. Meeting minutes from November 24, 2025 were amended to read total assets on hand: \$733, 581.92. Approval of the November 24, 2025 were so moved by Bill, seconded by Dean. Passed.

III. Public comments – See Old Business below \*

#### IV. Board Reports

##### A. Board of Charitable Giving – Jean Morehouse

- 1st quarter focus: blankets to Community Closet.
- Last Sunday in March will be a Noisy Offering collection for Community Closet.
- \$3000.00 budget for the year.

##### B. Board of Deacons – Carrie DeMull

- Pancake breakfast on January 10.
- Funeral luncheon for Duane VanDuzen on January 23.
- The book, "The Strategically Small Church" will be a focus for the year.
- Judy and Dean updated us on the Church Growth project they are spearheading.
- Election of officers: Brian Webb-Chairperson, Carrie DeMull-Secretary. Carrie DeMull will bring the minutes to the EC board each month.
- Deacon's meet the first Sunday of the month.
- The Deacons have set up some church goals to growth the health of the church both numerically and spiritually. Meaning, to have 50% of its members involved in some type of small group. Another goal is to get 50 new people through our doors to visit.
- Music Committee Proposal: Fremont United Methodist church would like to share their accompanist, Jackson Brooks, with us for two Sunday's a month. Lorene and Jack will share the responsibilities of the organ starting in May 2026. Rachel will play through the 2nd week of May. Mat Emerick made a motion to invite Jackson Brooks to be one of our contracted organists 2 to 3 times a month beginning in May. Carrie DeMull, seconded. Passed.

- The Lectors reading the Bible scripture on Sunday mornings will now be reading the NRSV of the Bible to go along with what is presented on the screen during the service.

#### C. Board of Christian Education – Carrie DeMull

- Crystal and I are alternating Sunday's teaching Sunday School. She is using a animated video version of The Chosen, and I am using wooden figures to tell the bible stories.
- The children memorize a bible verse weekly with prizes. The prizes are well stocked thanks to Crystal.

#### D. Board of Trustees – Bill Black

- Some in-house issues we have taken care of are the little sink in the nursery downstairs was plugged and the women's bathroom toilets in the Fellowship Hall will be replaced. Both issues we assume happened when the city of Fremont was having an issue with their water. Both issues have been taken care of.
- The Sanctuary doors had to be fixed. Please try to be cautious when pushing them open and shutting them.
- The entryway doors need to have their thresholds replaced to keep the outside air from coming into the entryway.
- Income was 115% over budget.
- Expenses were 97% of the budget.
- Our balance in our investment funds is \$705,650.76.

#### E. Women's Fellowship- Jean Morehouse

- Treasurer's Report: \$9426.69 is our fund balance.
- Entryway banner: hope, peace, love, joy, will hang in the entryway until Easter.
- Pat will research bags with our names on them for the welcome table and for hand out to the congregation.
- Gail will take care of food licensing requirements this spring.
- A travelogue will be presented by Rachel, Pat's daughter in law, on Iceland and Canada on March 22, after church. A light soup lunch will be served.
- Nancy Clause (Pat's sister-in-law) will be doing a presentation about Christmas time at the White House. She was an interior designer selected to help decorate the White House for Christmas. This will take place April 6, at 12:00 pm with a lunch being served.
- Valentine's Luncheon will be held at the church in fellowship hall on Friday, February 13, at 11:30. Spankie's Pizza lunch will be served.
- Duane Vanduzen's funeral and luncheon was held on January 23, 2026.
- Susan will ask Ted Caris to audit the women's fellowship financial books.

#### F. Technology Board – Jack Stewart

- VOIP is still working fine.
- Updated website still working fine.
- Two new cameras will be installed at the church. One will face the parking lot, and one will cover the entryway of the church. We will get the software updated at this time also.
- I am also talking with Bill Black about the thermostat systems throughout the church.

#### G. Men's Fellowship – Dean Morehouse

- The January meeting of the men's fellowship had 15 people in attendance.

Pastor Luke did the cooking with chilli, French bread, and chocolate peanut butter cookies. The speaker was Jackie Night from True North. She came to talk about the program ENGAGE. It is a program geared towards senior citizens. She thanked the congregation for giving cookies to the community.

- At the February meeting, Pastor Luke will talk about John C. Fremont. Bill Black will do the cooking.

#### V. Pastor's Report-Pastor Luke

- Duane Vanduzen's funeral was January 23, 2026, as noted above.
- December was a busy month with Advent, Christmas Eve, and Christmas services.
- Met with 2 people that want to become members of the church.
- February 18, 2026, Ash Wednesday service at the church. The following Sunday is the first Sunday in Lent.
- Our first Rooms of Refuge sleep over will be February 23-March 2. Grace Community will still be partnering with us.
- Growing our Church will be the focus for the year. This year we are "Future Focused." Look for a survey to be coming soon about small groups in general from Pastor Luke. 4-8 evangelism events this year. Prayer ministry and the Hope Initiative will be coming.
- More collaboration with the Deacons.

#### VI. Acceptance of reports – Pastor Luke motioned, and Bill seconded to approve – passed.

#### VII. Old Business

- The By Laws Committee has been working hard at revising the bylaws of the church.
- Town Hall meeting is scheduled for Saturday, March 28, at 9:30 am with a pancake breakfast.

#### VIII. New Business

- Pastor Luke made a motion to enter into an agreement with Jackson Brooks to be our contract organist the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month beginning in May until September and at that time we will reevaluate his contract. The dollar amount for the contract will be \$125 per Sunday. Bill seconded. Motion passed. Rachel will play though the second Sunday in May.
- Join us for a game day/potluck on Sunday afternoon, February 15th, at 3:00 pm. Bring your favorite game and dish to pass.

#### Growth Initiative Update-Dean and July

- Dean created a binder for all the EC. It has articles and resources pertaining to church growth.
- Book recommendation: "Church Revitalization Checklist".
  1. FCC needs to start setting goals-When goals are set, a checklist is helpful.
  2. FCC needs to have constant accountability-Like an experienced pilot, a checklist helps you get from point A to point B.
  3. FCC needs to have constant focus-a checklist helps you to be proactive.
  4. FCC needs to be applying the checklist-the checklist needs to be flexible enough to work within the overall plan.
  5. First Congregational Church of Fremont is not Dying. We are in a slump. We need to grow stronger not larger.
- As part of this growth initiative, if you missed the pancake breakfast, a deacon will be reaching out to you to see how you are doing and if we can help in any way.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Next Meeting is Monday, February 23, 2026, at 6:30 pm in the library.

Respectfully submitted  
Carrie DeMull

### Updated Church Address and Phone Directory

A new church directory will be put together in the next week - if you have any updates (email address, phone, cell phone, etc) or would like to be included in the directory please let the church office know asap - [congo@fremontfcc.org](mailto:congo@fremontfcc.org) or 231-924-4710.



**We're Updating  
Our Church Directory**

### Men's Fellowship Luncheon

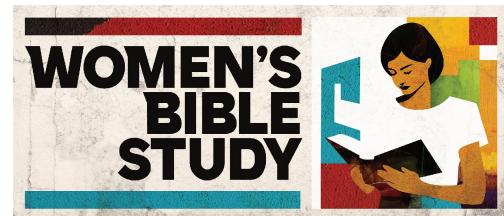


We'd love to have you join us for the next monthly Men's Fellowship Luncheon. The February lunch is Wednesday, Feb 4 at 12:00 noon.

Our chef is Bill Black and our speaker is Pastor Luke.  
Come! Join us and invite a friend.

### Women's Bible Study

Our first meeting of 2026 will be Wednesday, February 4 at 4:00 p.m. in the church library. This study is led by Beth Hooker and meets every Wednesday. We'd love to have YOU join us!!



### Women's Fellowship Valentine Lunch

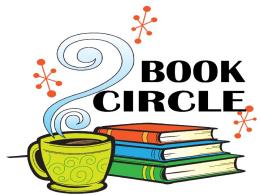
If you like to attend we ask that you sign up so we know how many to plan for. Our lunch will be held on Friday, February 13 at 11:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Call the church office if you would like to come. We will be serving Spanky's Pizza.

### Game Time

Come with your favorite game and a dish to share on Sunday, February 15, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. for a time of good fellowship and fun!



## Book Circle -



If you enjoy reading and discussing books you might enjoy coming to Book Circle. We have been off for the winter months but we will start again on March 3, at 1:00 p.m. at the Fremont Public Library. YOU are welcome to join us!! For more information give Bev Williams a call at 231-924-2525.

## Town Hall Meeting

Mark your calender for our next Town Hall meeting on Saturday, March 28. Details to come.



## Board of Charitable Giving



For the first quarter will be supporting Community Closet. For a few weeks yet (ends February 22) we will be collecting Blankets (new or clean used). Drop your blankets off in the basket in the narthex.

On Sunday, March 29 will be take a Noisy Offering with those donations also going to Community Closet.

## February Birthdays

- 11 Susan Stewart
- 13 Ginny Price
- 14 Dean Morehouse
- 17 Jean Morehouse
- 26 Beverly Williams



## Our Church Family ~

### *Health Concerns ~*

**Cathy Kellerman** is going on her 12<sup>th</sup> week of shingles (plus a staff infection under the shingles) - they are improving she says but still painful.

**Jim Rynberg** is currently hospitalized in Grand Rapids with some medical concerns.

Continue to keep in your thoughts and prayers those who are grieving, those who have moved from us to be closer to family, the homebound, those battling cancer, flu, anxiety, loneliness, those who are away for the winter months, those with medical concerns.



*Congratulations ~*

Congratulations to Craig Zeerip who will be inducted in the 2025 Michigan Wrestling Association Hall of Fame.

Craig's 35 year coaching career is a testament to sustained excellence, mentorship, and leadership in Michigan high school wrestling. From his early season as an assistant at Fremont High School to his impactful tenure as head coach at Hesperia and later Fremont Craig built programs defined by grit, sportsmanship, and academic integrity.

His teams earned 13 district titles, 8 regional championships, and twice reached the pinnacle of state competition finishing as runners up once and capturing the State Team Championship in 2008 while he served as assistant coach. Under his guidance, teams claimed five league titles across the Lakes 8 and WWAC conferences, and were honored nine times as Academic All-State and four time with the Good Sports are Winners Award.

Craig's influence extended beyond team accolades. He coached 16 individual state champions and mentored a Mr. Wrestler, three Mr. Wrestler finalists, including his sons, Justin, Brandon, and Colin Zeerip, and Tee Ward. Justin and Brandon were also recipients of the prestigious Dave Schultz Award, recognizing excellence in wrestling, academics and citizenship.

Craig's coaching peers recognized his excellence repeatedly: he earned Lakes 8 Coach of the Year, was named Regional Head Coach of the Year five times and Assistant Coach of the Year six times, and received State Coach of the Year honors both as a head and assistant coach. Twice, he was a finalist for National Wrestling Association National Coach of the Year.

Beyond the mat, Craig shaped the sport's future through service on the MHSAA Wrestling Seeding Committee (7X) and Executive Committee (3X). He shared his expertise as a presenter at the MWA Coaches Clinic, and led development as camp director for the Beast of the West Wrestling Camp.

Craig's legacy is etched not only in championships and accolades, but in the lives of athletes he inspired, the programs he elevated, and the standards he set for coaching in Michigan.

Congratulations!! Craig.



*Sympathy ~*

We extend our sympathy to Loretta VanDuzen and family. Duane VanDuzen, long time member of our church, passed away peacefully on December 24, 2025. A memorial service was held in the sanctuary on January 23 with Pastor Luke officiating.



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.

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.

## **Stop, Look and Listen**

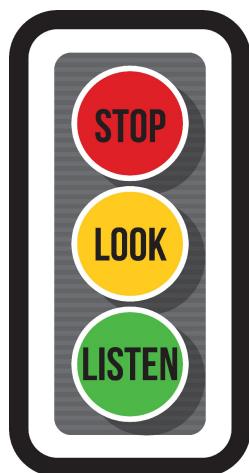
Why should we observe Lent?

We observe Lent because it causes us to STOP. Lent says, "Stop and rest awhile." Lent says, "Stop doing wrong."

We observe Lent because it tells us to LOOK. Look inward for an honest self-examination. Look upward to see the cross of Christ with healing and love. Look forward to the hope of the Resurrection.

We observe Lent because it tells us to LISTEN. Listen to the words of Christ. Listen to the voice of God. Listen to the winds of the Spirit of God.

Stop, look and listen. These three words are important for our safety in travel, but they may also be helpful for our journey through the days of Lent.



## **February Dates to Note:**

February 1 - Worship with Communion, Special music by Stacey, Martha & Jack - 10:00 a.m.  
February 1 - Deacons Meeting - 11:30 a.m.  
February 2 - Women's Fellowship Board Meeting - 10:00 a.m.  
February 4 - Men's Fellowship Luncheon - 12:00 noon  
February 4 - Women's Bible Study - 4:00 p.m.  
February 8 - Worship - 10:00 a.m.  
February 9 - Tech Board - 6:30 p.m.  
February 10 - Small Group - Pat Krehn's home - 10:00 a.m.  
February 11 - Women's Bible Study - 4:00 p.m.  
February 13 - Valentine Lunch - 11:30 a.m.  
February 15 - Worship with Communion - 10:00 am.  
February 15 - Game Time 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.  
February 18 - Trustees - 1:30 p.m.  
February 18 - Women's Bible Study - 4:00 p.m.  
February 18 - Ash Wednesday Service - 6:00 p.m.  
February 22 - Worship - 10:00 a.m.  
February 23-March 2 - Rooms of Refuge  
February 23 - Executive Council - 6:30 p.m.  
February 24 - Small Group - Pat Krehn's home - 10:00 a.m.  
February 25 - Women's Bible Study - 4:00 p.m.  
M/W/F Men's Fellowship Coffee - 9:30 a.m. - ?  
M/W/F Wood Shop Open 10:00 a.m. (when two or more are gathered)  
Thursday Christmas Crafters - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.



## **Looking Ahead:**

March 3 - Book Circle Resumes  
March 22 - Soup Lunch & Travelogue with Rachel Poches - Iceland & Banff Canada  
March 28 - Town Hall Meeting  
March 29 - Noisy Offering for Community Closet  
April 6 - Chicken Salad Lunch with Pat Krehn's Sister sharing about decorating the White House for Christmas

## **Precious Lord, Take My Hand**

Thomas Dorsey, a jazz musician from Atlanta, made a bold decision in 1926 to leave behind secular music and devote his talent to writing songs for the Lord. But following that call wasn't easy. During the Great Depression, many church leaders criticized his soulful gospel style, calling it "the devil's music." Dorsey later joked, "I got kicked out of some of the best churches in the land."

Then, in 1932, tragedy struck. While in St. Louis for a revival, he received a telegram that his wife had died suddenly during childbirth. His faith was shaken to the core, and grief nearly silenced him. Yet in his deepest sorrow, Dorsey turned back to what he knew best — music. Out of that heartbreak came one of the most beloved hymns of all time: "Precious Lord, take my hand, Lead me on, let me stand. I am tired, I am weak, I am worn..."

Dorsey's song reminds us that even in our valleys, God is near — guiding us, strengthening us, and using our pain to comfort others who walk the same road.



## Lent and Fasting - Pastor Luke

On February 18th we begin the season of Lent. It begins with Ash Wednesday and goes until Easter Sunday. It is a season of reflection, prayer, and striving for Holiness. We often fast during this time to prepare our hearts for Easter. Fasting doesn't earn us anything from God but rather helps train us to control our desires. It reorients our life from our desires to Christ. Lent is particularly appropriate time to fast as it prepares us for the celebration of Jesus work on the cross and his resurrection.



Lent is a forty-day period based on Jesus's fast in the desert. We are encouraged to fast, following Jesus's example, and to prepare ourselves for God's work in history, our communities, and our lives. We fast to prepare for the celebration of Easter. Fasting reminds us of our sorrow for our sins. It also helps us prepare our minds and hearts for the work God is calling us to. Just as Lent and Easter coincide with spring, a time of shaking off winter's lethargy, it is also a time for Christians to become more proactive in their ministry.

The goal of fasting is to discipline our body, soul, and mind, and to grow in holiness through self-control. It is a time for opening ourselves to God and His guidance. By removing distractions from our lives, we create more space for God to work. Or, as I often think of it, hunger pangs serve as a reminder to keep my mind focused on Christ.

For me, growing up, fasting meant abstaining from food for a period of time, usually a week. Some fasted more rigorously; I know of churches where members abstained from food and drink from sunrise to sunset for the duration of the fast. However, there are other forms of fasting. These include giving up certain foods, such as meat, eggs, or sugar, or abstaining from activities like social media, news consumption, coffee, or other vices. It could be as simple as skipping a meal. The goal is to give up something challenging, forcing you to rely on God rather than yourself. So, the question is: what will you give up this Lent?

