

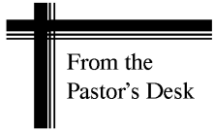
# Pilgrim's Progress

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## December 2024

"The purpose of this church shall be to bind together followers of Jesus Christ, for the object of sharing in the worship of God and in making His will dominant in the lives of men and women, especially as that will is set forth in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ."

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John 1:4-5 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

This Christmas season takes place in a world with many troubles. Wars and rumors of wars (as Jesus warned) about and there are many divisions in society today. I take comfort in the profound words of the first chapter of John's Gospel that include the words about the life of Christ, not just his days on earth, but also that He is the source of all life. He is life itself, and that life is the light of men. God promises that the darkness cannot comprehend or overcome the light. If course, that begs the question, "what does this all mean?" Darkness is evil, selfishness and all the "works of the flesh" found in Galatians 5. Light, I suspect, means clarity, wisdom discernment and the grace to see the world, and ourselves, as God sees it. To see what is truly of eternal value and what is not. Now, as it was then, there is darkness, but we can take comfort that God, and goodness shall overcome. My prayer for our congregation this Christmas season is that we grow in that light, which is the life of Christ, that we grow in wisdom and in the understanding of ourselves and the world, that we find ways to overcome the challenges that we face and that we see the Spirit of God at work. Have a Merry Christmas.

### **Sermons-**

December 1 "Stand" Luke 21:34-38; Ephesians 6:13  
December 8 "The Refiner's Fire" Malachi 3:1-4; Philippians 1:3-11  
December 15 8:00 service "What About Anxiety?" Zephaniah 3:14-20; Philippians 4:4-7  
10:30 service Children's Christmas Program  
December 22 "The Song of Mary" 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-55  
December 24 "Pondering Things in Our Hearts" Isaiah 9:22-7; Luke 2:1-20  
December 29 "The Elect of God" 1 Peter 1:9-12; Colossians 3:12-17



***Please keep our Members in Care Facilities in your thoughts & prayers:***



**Bickford:** Joanie Smith-Legg #108,

**Mill Pond Care Center:** Romaine Mackaman

**Veterans Home:** Marian Gerdes

**Southridge:** Betty Runner #212

**Glenwood Place:** Mildred Lathrop #145, Anita Niehouse #116,  
Elenor Tjossem #160, Lenora Brown #161

**Creeside in Grundy Center:** Leta Lacina

**Cross Creek in Lee's Summit, MO:** Vicki Long

All 2024 donations need to be **in the church office**  
**BEFORE December 30<sup>th</sup>** for them to go toward this year's  
taxes and funds!



Breana & Luis Alvarado

12/4/15

9 years



December 2 Sarah Paustian  
December 8 Don Bogenrief  
December 11 Brent Vellinga  
December 12 Shauna Banks  
December 20 Anita Niehouse, Nay Liew

December 25 Norma Dannen  
December 27 Nate Speas, Kay Miller-Todd  
December 28 Sarah Nullmeyer  
December 29 Patrick Stewart  
December 30 Todd Stanley  
December 31 Cindy Shirar

## **Meals On Wheels**



The mission's team is still committed to doing our part for Meals on Wheels in Marshalltown! Our part is, one Saturday a month (the fourth Saturday) and we do the east route. We will now pick up and drop off the coolers and tubs for meal delivery at the hospital under the canopy by the entrance to the emergency room. The hospital has asked drivers not to park directly in front of the ER doors, and for no longer than 10 minutes. There should be enough room for two cars to fit under the canopy. This will be helpful during inclement weather, and it will allow the kitchen staff to keep an eye out for our arrival and return directly from their window. Please sign up in the narthex or call the church office (641-752-4239) to volunteer. You will be making a difference for someone that day and it feels good to help. Any questions please call me Kristi Hassler 641-753-3276 or Doris McCarty 641-752-7604.

### **The following 2025 dates available are:**

February 22  
August 23

April 26  
September 27

May 24  
October 25

July 26  
December 27

## **News from Diaconate Board**

December 1<sup>st</sup> kicks off the Advent/Christmas Season.  
We look forward to the youth's Christmas program on the 15<sup>th</sup> at the second service. The traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve service will begin at 5 P.M. with a prelude from our musicians starting at 4:45 P.M.  
On the 29<sup>th</sup> we will have a hymn sing interspersed during the service. We will sing 6 of our beloved Christmas hymns to close out the season.

# YOUTH GROUP NEWS

D.O.G.'s (Depend on God) is a group for K-4th grade kids on Tuesday nights from 5-6:30pm with a meal.

Jr. P.Y. (Pilgrim Youth) is a group for 5-8th grade youth on Wednesday nights from 5-6:30pm with a meal.

P.Y. (Pilgrim Youth) is a group for 9-12th grade youth on Wednesday nights from 6:15-8pm with a meal.

Power Hour is a group for K-12th grade youth on Sunday mornings from 9:15-10:20am.

## December:

Power Hour—

No group on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 8th & 15th (children's Christmas Program practice), 22nd (Christmas Party), No group on the 29th

DOG's—

3,10,17 (Christmas Party), No group the 24th or 31st

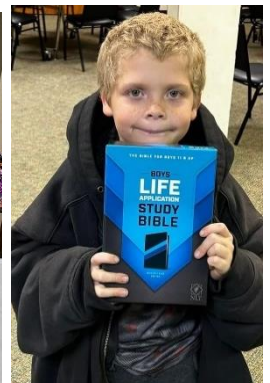
Jr PY & PY—

Combined groups (Jr PY & PY) on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, & 18th (Christmas Party), No group on the 25th



We are very excited for the Children's Christmas Program that will be on Sunday, December 15th during the 10:30am service.

In November we were able to give three special kids their very own Bibles. The best gift to give our kids is God's Word!







What a wonderful time we had packaging meals to send to our neighbors in need on the east coast. Our youth wanted to share God's love by providing meals to help people who have been affected by the hurricanes this fall. We were able to provide 2700 meals.



We love getting to put together Operation Christmas Child boxes with our youth at church! We collected shoebox gifts filled with toys, school supplies, and hygiene items that will be delivered to children in need around the world. The mission of Operation Christmas Child, which is a ministry through Samaritans Purse, is to demonstrate

God's love in a tangible way to children throughout the world that also allows opportunities to share the Gospel.





We love getting the opportunity to put up American flags around Marshalltown! We had a great Veteran's Day. We are so thankful for the fundraising opportunity provided to our youth group by the Morning Optimist Club.



## Harvest Dinner

Thanks to all who came and those who helped make the Harvest Dinner a success this year!

We served nearly 80 meals. Harvest Committee coordinators were Jane Symons, Kristi Hassler, and Lisa Blabaum. Special thanks to our Pilgrims this year, Bob and Judy Gaynor for greeting, taking offering and reminding us of our heritage! Thanks to Arlene Selby for playing piano and leading us in a verse of "We Gather Together" before our meal, and to Pastor Dan for blessing the meal.

Thanks to Pat Anderson for making the cranberries, Kristi for all the grocery shopping and the prep of green beans, and Jane for the prep of cheesy potatoes. Hy-Vee catered the turkey, ham, and rolls. Thanks to our Saturday Volunteers for setting up, the Sunday morning crew for cutting and plating pie, the servers in the kitchen, the youth servers for delivering meals to tables, and the clean up crew including Rod Hassler, Brent Vellinga, Shelly Speas, Dwayne and Maxie Shultz, Pat Wiese, John Blabaum, Katie Lundberg, Miriam Bryant, Henry Symons, Claire and Libby Meyer, Lydia and Avayah Speas, Mallory Fowler, Savannah Piper, Layla Wimberly-Kersbergen. Thank you to our church Secretary Katie Vogeler for tracking the reservations and making place cards for reservations. And finally, Thank you to all who attended and enjoyed Harvest Dinner 24!





# **Board of Christian Ed**

Good Morning!

I am Julie Paustian. I am representing the Board of Christian Education. I am here to answer a few questions about the church wide Bible study being considered by the Board of Christian Education.

A little background:

The church Renewal Process participants identified all church fellowship opportunities as a need here at First Congregational Church in Marshalltown.

The Christian Ed Board has the goal of organizing fellowship groups whose purposes are to expand our learning and understanding of God's Word as Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

Support for this effort is found in Scripture.

Fellowship is one of God's primary means of supporting believers.

1. Fellowship with Himself
2. Fellowship with other believers

Hebrews 10:24-25 encourages believers to meet together to encourage each other in love as they do God's work. Individuals grow in faith as each is uplifted by fellow believers.

Bible study fellowship provides us with strength as we share the power of God's Word. We learn and grow our faith as we share with other believers.

Bible study fellowship is a way of caring for each other.

Hebrews 3:12-13 explains the power in fellowship as a way to encourage and uplift each other day after day which is an essential part of our daily spiritual walk.

Koininia is that term for biblical fellowship which builds unity of spirit as Christians share beliefs, convictions and behaviors in the context of studying God's Word. It produces mutual cooperation in the worship of God. It sets the foundation for cooperation in His will being done in the world.

Biblical fellowship reminds us we are not alone.

Our objective is to glorify God as we share and encourage each other. We respect our weaknesses and our differences. We forgive and find forgiveness as we support each other with truth and love.

Arthur Rouner in The Congregational Way of Life reminds us that "the church itself....every local, gathered church of Christ bears direct responsibility for nurturing, for training, and for raising up its own ministry."

May I point out that we work hard to provide Christian education with God's Word for our youth. Much time and money is spent on our wonderful youth ministry. Some believe strongly that we need similar efforts for our adult education ministry. We as adults need to be strong in faith and God's Word to be the leaders our youth need.

It is the Word of God that defeats the enemy when spoken in faith. Writing God's Word on our hearts leads us to be able to use it as God intended for us to be victorious. Speaking God's Word brings the Holy Spirit into action. God's Word teaches us how to be fruitful Christians. Jeremiah 29:13 says, "And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." In studying God's Word together, we are seeking Him as He wishes. Studying God's Word with fellow believers equips each of us to be victorious in our daily walk together. It is OUR ministry as a congregation. Rouner said it well. I repeat his words, "the church itself...every local, gathered church of Christ bears direct responsibility for nurturing, for training, and for raising up its own ministry."

The Board of Christian Education is working to organize a church wide Bible study based on these elements. In your bulletin there is a simple survey to help us plan. Men and women. This fellowship is for all of us. Your ideas, needs, and participation are essential for our growth as a body of Christ. YOU are essential. Our joy is derived from following the Holy Spirit's directions as we grow in God's Word together.

Thank you for taking a minute here to fill out your survey and add your thoughts and suggestions. You may place it in the offering plate this morning. We would like all surveys returned by December 15 so we may begin processing what you share with us. Let us seek God's Word together as we work side by side! Thank you!

My last thought....  
I am reminded of the worship song, "They will know we are Christians by our love."  
Thank you, Lord, for these words.

We are one in the spirit, we are one in the Lord.  
And we pray that all unity will one day be restored...  
They will know we are Christians by our love  
    By our love,  
They will know we are Christians by our love.

The next verses continue....  
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand...  
    And spread the news that God is in our land.

We will work with each other  
    We will work side by side.

All praise to the Father  
From whom all things come  
And praise to Christ Jesus His only Son  
All praise to the spirit  
Who makes us one.....  
They will know we are Christians by our love!





## Pillars of Faith @ F. C. C.

For those of you who read “Pillars of Faith” in November, the person was Krystal Randall. If you haven’t read this article in the church’s newsletter and you have a computer, you can find it at this web site: <https://www.fccmarshalltown.org/newsletter> Thanks, Krystal, for all you have done, do, and will do!

One of the definitions of a pillar is: a person or thing regarded as reliably providing essential support for something. The Biblical definition of faith is found in Hebrews 11:1 which says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Revised Standard Version. Also in the New King James Version of the Bible, Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” This gift of God is the reason the receivers of this gift want to be the hands and feet of Jesus on earth. So, with these two things in mind, we would like to present the “Pillar of Faith” for December.

Several of the December Pillar of Faith’s family in-law had been long-time members, that is where the “church search” began. As it ended up this person looked no further and joined FCC in 1986. So this person has been a member of FCC for 38 years.

After bringing their two young daughters to church for about a year, James Swope, who was on the nominating Committee at the time, asked this person to consider being on the Board of Christian Education. Accepting this opportunity began the journey of delving into the building blocks of FCC. Various memberships were held after that, which included: Board of Deacons, the Benevolence and Missions Committee and helping to plan a few bazaars the church held many moons ago. Being a member of Amity and Women’s Fellowship for several years truly helped her develop friendships which continue to this day.

She was the Director of Christian Education for seven years which was under the guidance of the BCE. This included some of her favorite adventures, for example: five day-time VBS days at Isaac Walton League for children Kindergarten through fifth grade and four over night days of Summer Church Camp at Camp Quaker Heights in Eldora for third to eleventh graders with high school seniors as her “helpers”.

When she reflects on her thirty years of teaching Sunday School, some of her memorable moments were during “Opening”. This was fifteen minutes each Sunday morning when they sang a few songs, (Julie Paustian was their accompanist) shared birthday celebrations and a special message of the day. But her favorite time of the Opening was when the children would share memorable things that happened during their week.

For 20 years, she had the privilege of working with FCC’s “Heart Warmer” perpetual calendars. She recalled one order she took over the phone. The gentleman was calling from



England and said he had been “on holiday in Nantucket” (insert a British accent here) and saw a copy of our “Heart Warmer”. He placed an order. Oprah Winfery’s assistant ordered a copy for Oprah’s desk. We received a call from an actress’s employee that ordered a copy for his employer and we sent a copy to actress Patricia Neal!

She has wonderful memories of her years playing in the Bell Choir....the practices being her favorite part. “There was WAAAY too much chatting and laughing along with practicing! Thank you for your patience Jonna and Krystal”.

Her favorite involvement with FCC was when she was blessed to have been asked to be part of the staff of FCC, which she truly loved for eleven years. She was privileged to have worked with Pastor Greg Ellicey, Barry Holmes and Jean Bower. Many church members enjoyed referring to her as “The Church Lady”.

When asked, “Do you have any advice for the future of our church?” her response was, “My wish this Christmas Season is for everyone to have joy, peace and love in their hearts.”

Now if you are wondering why this person’s name was not mentioned, it wasn’t a mistake. Can you guess who this person is? If not, be sure and read your January 2025 newsletter. The answer will be there under the title “Pillars of Faith @ F. C. C.”.



## **Women’s Ministry**

Women's Ministry general meeting will be Monday, December 2 at 5:30 at the home of Georgia Thomas.

December Bible Study with Jane will be only Monday, December 9 at 5:30 in the library.



may your  
Christmas  
be a celebration  
of God's  
love!



dazzlejunction.com



2024

FCC CALENDAR OF EVENTS!  
 Sunday Worship Services:  
 8:00am & 10:30am

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 Monday-Friday 9am-Noon 641-752-4239						
<b>1 Communion</b> In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc	<b>2 Women's Ministry</b> 5:30pm	<b>3 DOGS 5-6:30pm</b>	<b>4 Men's Church coffee</b> 8am @ Hy-Vee  Jr PY 5-6:30pm PY 6:15-8pm	<b>5 Bell Choir</b> practice 5:30pm	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc  <b>Power Hour</b> 9:15-10:20am	<b>9 Women's Bible Study</b> 5:30pm	<b>10 DOGS 5-6:30pm</b>  <b>BMC meets 8:45am</b>	<b>11 Men's Church coffee</b> 8am @ Hy-Vee  Jr PY 5-6:30pm PY 6:15-8pm	<b>12 Bell Choir</b> practice 5:30pm	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc <b>Power Hour</b> 9:15-10:20am  <b>Youth Christmas Program 10:30</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17 DOGS 5-6:30pm</b>  <b>Diaconate meets 6:30 PM</b>	<b>18 Men's Church coffee</b> 8am @ Hy-Vee  Jr PY 5-6:30pm PY 6:15-8pm  <b>Trustees meet 6:30 PM</b>	<b>19 Bell Choir</b> practice 5:30pm	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc <b>Power Hour</b> 9:15-10:20am	<b>23</b>	<b>24 Christmas Eve service 5PM.</b> <b>Prelude starting at 4:45PM</b>  <b>Office Closed</b>	<b>25 Christmas Day</b>  <b>Office Closed</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> <b>11am MOW Volunteer:</b> <b>Rod &amp; Kristi Hassler</b>
<b>29</b> In-Person Worship 8am and 10:30 svcs 10:30 Svc/YouTube Fellowship follows 10:30am Svc <b>Hymn Sing Service @10:30PM</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>  <b>Office Closed</b>				<b>color code:</b> youth events Church mtgs Special events Comm. Events Color copy on bulletin boards



First Congregational Church  
312 W. Main St.  
Marshalltown, 50158

Office hours 9 a.m. - noon Mon - Fri  
641-752-4239  
Worship Services: 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.  
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m. All ages in  
the LOFT  
web page: [www.fccmarshalltown.org](http://www.fccmarshalltown.org)

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Churches

