



105 E. Main
Street

Ionia, MI
48846

Service

9:00 am

www.ioniafirst.com

616-527-1860

**December
2024
Newsletter**



THE PASTOR'S PEN

Ionia First — December 2024

For a child has been born for us, and a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...(Isaiah 9:6)

Greetings in the Name of Christ!

We are in the season of Advent, a time of expectation and arrival. What I have always liked about Advent is that it feels me with a sense of exhilaration, somewhat more muted now than when I was younger. In the days of my youth, this expectation came from arrival of the Christmas season, the gift-giving and celebration of the birth of the Christ-child Jesus. Though not always an easy time of year, my sense of exhilaration and anticipation never withered or died.

I am hopeful that in this season of Advent, you will find reasons to be happy and have joy in many moments of your day. Advent is a time of anticipation and hope. We who trust in God always have hope and that hope brings an anticipation for the good blessings God will always provide.

Linda and I have been blessed by the gift of being a part of the Ionia First and Easton congregations. Your presence and fellowship provide a rare and treasured gift for us as we travel the pathways of senior life. We have felt God's goodness and love flow from you to us and are thankful. We anticipate the coming year will be one that fills us and you as well with God's eternal hope.

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Continuation of “Pastor’s Pen”

I have been heartened by the ministry focus of both Easton and Ionia First congregations. Both congregations are community-minded and eager to provide the love of God to persons in need. Even with scarce resources, you joyfully give.

History is important and Ionia First has a significant place in the history of Ionia and beyond. Thanks to Linda Ciangi, significant parts of Ionia First’s history will be displayed in a Legacy Room she is hard at work completing. The Legacy Room will include photos, pictures and images of significant people and events, and many historical artifacts. One important item in the Legacy Room is the cornerstone laying service held Oct. 30, 1932 for the construction of a new church to replace the church building that was destroyed by fire in 1930.

We were looking forward to a visit from Rita Murata, a representative of the Inclusive Ministry in Rwanda on Sunday Dec. 8. Unfortunately, Rita is still in the visa application process and will not be interviewed by the US State Department until July of next year. In place of her visit, we will show pictures of my Rwanda visit.

I am appreciative that the Staff Parish Committees of Easton and Ionia First have agreed to recommend a pay increase for staff.

The evening of Dec. 11 Easton congregation members will go caroling in the community. This sounds like fun and I plan to participate if the weather is not too bad.

Please place on your calendar the joint Christmas Eve service to be held at Ionia First at 7:00pm. This should be a time of joyful celebration.

Our Worship Committee has agreed to a few changes in worship for 2025.

- First, we will have a mission moment the third Sunday of each month.**
- Second, we will begin our worship on the third Sunday of the month with a short hymn sing beginning in January. You can give your song preferences to Becky in advance and we will choose selections from your preferences for our hymn sing.**

We will begin our work on visioning in January. If you are interested in being part of a small visioning group, please let me know. Also, I am hopeful we can begin a grief support group to provide mutual care for persons who have lost loved ones or are facing life crises.

I pray your Christmas celebration will be joyful and the new year you enter will bless you in many ways.

Blessings,

Lamarr

Administration Board Report

On our altar during this Advent Season you will notice a Chalice which is very dark in color. This Communion Cup was rescued from the remains of the fire which destroyed the Methodist Episcopal Church of Ionia on October 4th 1930. It was rescued by member Roy Weber and given back to First United Methodist Church by Mr. Weber's daughter, Marie Rosecrance, when she moved away from Ionia on September of 1990. Feel free to view the cup after service, please do not touch.

At the same time she also gave us a copy of the history of the Methodist Parsonages of Ionia, compiled by Viggo Nielson, who was a former active member of First United Methodist Church.

Please do not forget the Great Lakes Chorus will be appearing here on Thursday December 12 at 7:00 P.M. Free will offering will be taken at the door. Refreshments will be provided after the Concert in Fellowship hall.

Linda



SPRC

I hope that all of you had a blessed Thanksgiving and look forward to a beautiful Advent Season. A motion was passed at the last Administrative Board meeting to raise the pay of our IT person and custodian for 2025. Our organizer is happy with her present wage. Although not an employee, Fonda Kasper is doing a marvelous job painting our building. If you see her, compliment her on her fine job.

Pastor Gibson is working on a presentation of his time in Rwanda. We are excited about that.

Evaluations of the staff will happen in the first part of January. Our relationship with Easton continues with a potluck on January 12th here at First. Bring a dish that you love to make. Place settings will be supplied.

Christmas Eve will be a combined service at 7 pm at First Church.

We are truly blessed.

Rebecca, Virginia, Ann, Jack, Roxie, and Jan

Trustee

The painting of the church is coming along. The Café is in the process and should be completed in a few weeks. The Church is looking up, with most of the repairs completed and nothing bad in the works.

We have contracted a company for snow removal. The parking lot will be plowed on Sundays before 8:00 am and salted if needed. At least 2 inches of snow will trigger the plowing.

Trustee meetings are the first Wednesday of the month at 10:00 in fellowship hall. Everyone is welcome and invited. If you know of anything which needs attention please let one of the Trustees know.

“Don’t live for your presence to be noticed, but for your absence to be felt.”
Bob Marley

Thanks

Joe

Missions

In November, we supported Mobility Worldwide, also known to many of us as P.E.T. (personal energy transportation).

December support will go to Delbert and Sandy Groves and their work at New Life Center. The project's number for giving is 1505A. The project provides PET bikes, educational classes and health services. It also works to provide property for the expansion of churches within Zambia. The Groves work to develop good lay people by providing spiritual, physical, and intellectual growth within the community. They did have a furlow a couple of years ago at the annual conference. God bless their work.

The third Sunday of each month will be Mission Sunday. Knowing where our money goes is so essential.

We have a request from RAVE'S Alexes Thane to present information on the organization. The time for her presentation is to be determined.

January 12th, we will welcome Rachel Kessel to our service. She will thank us for our support of Crop Walk over the years.

The mission meeting is on December 19th, immediately after church.

Thank you, Dave, for writing all the checks that go to Missions. It is work well done.

“So many gods, so many creeds,

So many paths that wind and wind,

When just the art of being kind

Is all this sad world needs.” Ella Wilcox, To Lift or Learn

Jan, Peg, Millie, and Marilyn

Community Drawers News

In November we were able to help 16 families which equals 72 people. The families we helped also were able to be fitted with new winter coats for themselves and the kiddos. 48 coats were given out including at least 20 pairs of shoes and boots. Thank you to everyone who was able to come in on that Wednesday and help. We cannot help anyone without your donation of time. Thank you for helping your community.

It is the time of year when we start running low on our funding. If the current trend continues, we will be running low {on items and funds} in two months. I work on Grant requests in January, February and March but we usually do not hear about approval of {sometimes lesser amounts} or denial until Spring. If you could help during this season of giving your donation would be most welcome!

Take Care and have a wonderful Advent Season

Rebecca Brown



In Memory of Avis White

Avis White passed away last Tuesday, November 26. She was a member of First Church for several years following her retirement from teaching. She was active in UMW, and a generous benefactor to the Church nursery which she funded for four years and to the ongoing expenses of the Church even after she moved to Grand Rapids to a Senior living center. We celebrate her and her dedication to her Christian faith and to our Church.

She is truly a Saint.

Reminders

IM KIDS 3rd Meal

- ◆ This is an ongoing mission. We are helping to feed over **850** kids each day for their third meal. They are accepting the following items:
 - Peanut butter
 - Jelly or jam
 - Fruit bars
 - Applesauce cups
 - Fruit boxes
 - Snack packs
 - Juice boxes - must be 100 % juice
 - Sandwich size bags
 - Dry cereal
 - Brown paper lunch bags
- **Please Help fill the two Front Pews of our Church. We will deliver it to where it needs to go.**



IM SAFE CAC

Ionia Montcalm Secure and Friendly Environment
Child Advocacy Center

December Birthdays

Carrie Stout **12/01**
Peg Morman **12/19**
Greg Hotchkin **12/20**

December Anniversaries

Ken & Ann Felice **12/27**



Prayer Requests

Brent Spencer - Airforce

Phil Kahl at Zeeland

MediTodge

Roberta Sterner Family

Ethel Clark Family

Avis White Family

Please send prayer requests to
616-527-1860 or Email to
Bluebirdm66@yahoo.com

December Liturgists

01 **Deanna Hotchkin**
08 **Rebecca Brown**
15 **Jan Powell**
22 **Eric Asher**
29 **Rebecca Brown**

December 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 Office Closed	3	4 Trustee @ 10:00 am	5 Community meal at 6:00 p.m	6 Worship Meeting 11:00	7
8 Noisy Offering	9	10 Moms support group 7:00	11	12 Great Lakes Chours 7:00 pm	13	14
15 Mission Sunday	16	17	18 1:30 to 4:30 - Community Drawers	19 Community meal at 6:00 p.m.	20	21
22	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 7:00 pm	25	26 Community meal at 6:00 p.m.	27 DEADLINE FOR NEWS LETTER ITEMS	28
29	30	31				

Finance Report, December 2024
Remaining Balances as of 010/31/2024
Special Funds (Designated Giving)

Memorial fund	4,425.66
Board of Trustees	-11,831.84
Children's Ministry	8,099.48
Camp & School Scholarships	1,395.07
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	777.34
Community Drawers	6,255.03
Music on the Green	998.19
Holiday Concert	3,823.99
Monthly Mission	655.00
General Evangelism	9,326.29
General Outreach	6,297.25
Funeral/Wedding/Flowers	1,831.36
IM Kids 3rd Meal	300.00

General Fund (Church Budget)

Income	4,411.60
Expenses	20,954.67
Surplus (Deficit)	(16,543.07)
Ending Bank Balance	20,202.61





The Great Lakes Chorus
will be returning to
First United Methodist Church
105 East Main Ionia
Thursday, December 12, 2024
Show will begin at 7:00 p.m.
There will be a free will offering.
Reception to Follow



Doors open at 6:30
Handicapped Accessible