



105 E. Main
Street

Ionia, MI
48846

Service

9:00 am

www.ioniafirst.com

616-527-1860

**February
2025
Newsletter**



THE PASTOR'S PEN

Ionia First — February 2025

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...see the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his people, and God will be with them and will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more, mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away (Revelation 21:1-4).

Greetings in the Name of Christ!

John in our above passage paints a picture of the perfect state all creation will exist in when God's rule is established and complete. It is a state of existence, free of worries, anxieties, fears, doubt, greed, ambition and all that sets one person against another.

While this is the characterization of an ideal state, it also speaks to the discouraging condition that characterized the Christian community of John's Day. John understood that within each instance of despair hope also resides. So, his message is one of hope; a message we proclaim today as a redeemed people, saved by God's grace.

My, how time flies. We are now in February and nearing the end of our winter sojourn.

February is Valentine month. Happy Valentines Day! Remember our love for each other and God's love for you. Perhaps we can remember to be a valentine to all as we share God's love with all we meet.

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THE PASTOR'S PEN

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February is also Black History month. Our sermon topics for the month will touch on themes that have been important to the African American community. I am hopeful you will find these themes meaningful also for your life. We follow Black History Month in March with March also being Women's History Month.

March also begins the Christian season of Lent. We will begin our Lent commemoration with Ash Wednesday (March 5). The Easton and First Worship Committees have come together to plan for Lent. An Ash Wednesday worship service will be held at Easton (6:00pm) and Ionia First (7:15). Mark your calendar.

We are also planning Lenten study activities which will include a Lent study booklet for congregation members and a weekly Lent study with meal at 6:30 pm each Wednesday through Holy Week. The Lent study will begin Wednesday March 12 at Ionia First and will rotate to Easton the next Wednesday (March 19).

We will follow this Lent study rotation throughout Lent. We will hold a joint Maundy Thursday worship service during Holy Week at Ionia First starting at 6:30 and a Good Friday worship service at noon in the Ionia First sanctuary. The Ionia First building will open on Good Friday from noon to 3 pm for persons who want to meditate or pray in the sanctuary.

The Easton Good Friday worship will be held later in the day at a time the worship committee will set.

I have talked with the Church Councils of Easton and Ionia First and we will soon identify a team at each church to begin work on an updated ministry plan. Over about 6 months we will look at models of church vitality, assess our resources and needs and present recommendations to the Church Council (probably in the Fall).

I am also hopeful of beginning a support group for persons facing grief or challenges in their lives. If you are interested in participating in a support group of this nature please let me know (phone: 608-509-6832; lvigibson48@gmail.com) or leave a message for me with the church secretary.

New developments:

At Ionia First – we begin worship with a hymn sing the third Sunday. Be sure to send your song preferences to Becky in the church office.

At Easton – once each month we will have a special Sunday for children. The children will stay in worship with a space in the front for them so they can be kids while participating in worship.

Please remain in prayer for Sally Flanders the Easton UMC pianist for healing of her eyesight.

Remember God's presence as we enter into a time of extreme uncertainty that may trigger many anxieties. God will not leave us but will travel with us through the uncertain times and help us find way that keeps us whole. Trust in God always.

Blessings,

Lamarr

Administration Board Report

HAVING YOUR SAY!

It's 2025 and as we continue to travel the path of God's love on the corner of Hudson and Main Street in Ionia, the congregation is to be congratulated for supporting upgrades to the building and ongoing mission outreach to the community. The new church roof has received numerous compliments from local folks who have noticed the improvement.

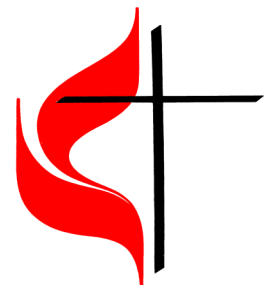
Going forward, your ideas, opinions and concerns are welcome and encouraged by the AD Board. We want everyone to have their say. This will assist the Board in setting the Agenda for monthly meetings where we can set time to discuss items in detail. To share church business, contact the office staff at 616-527-1860 or office hours Monday, Wednesday or Friday from 10:00 to 2:00 or send a written note to me at 105 E. Main St. That will be placed in my mail box. Yes, we do have post office boxes!

Surely, we all look forward to sharing Sunday fellowship and time for worship and Thanksgiving knowing your operating concerns will be addressed at the Board meeting and that everyone is welcome. I personally have to say "Thank You" to all church members who have provided transportation to and from church activities during these blustery winter days!

Linda Ciangi, AD Board Chair



EVERYONE IS WELCOME to ATTEND
Traditional Worship
Communion Every Sunday
Sunday Morning Service at 9:00
Coffee Hour following service
105 East Main Street, Ionia, Michigan 48846



SPRC

The committee met before the January 2025 Administrative Board to authorize hiring Becky Brown as the secretary at First United. She will work 44 hours per month and receive the same compensation as our other employees. On February 5th, the committee will meet to revise the secretary's job description. We also have a new secretary to the SPRC as Becky can no longer serve. Luckily, Virginia has consented to fulfill the duties.

Also of concern is David Fedewa's upcoming surgery. I will ask Trustee members to take over the job while he is gone. In the past, we had no shortage of individuals who stepped up to help. Our church needs assistance from all members. Thank you all who will help.

One last item: the church should be closed when the Ionia Public Schools are closed. There are times, however, when the weather improves, and meetings can continue. Please be sure to use good judgment when roads become impassable.

Ann, Jack, Roxie, Virginia, and Jan

Missions

Our Mission for February 2025 will be Enrich. Enrich is an all volunteer organization that raises funds to help local people in need. Because their funds are raised only here, in the community by store sales and grants, your generosity is greatly appreciated.

Like all organizations expenses have increased. The store has had to limit their hours and has had to organize fund raising events. One of their greatest needs is a new roof.

Jan, Peg and Millie



Trustee News

We are having small issues with some of the equipment. This is a normal thing as most of the problems are simply old age. An example is the organ which has some sticky pipes, heating system which had a valve problem, etc.

We are ready to deliver the food for IM Kids. They are feeding **838** kids per day, five days a week with approximately 70% going back to Ionia Schools. Time to start filling pews again.

With the new roof, snow does not stay up on the roof. This causes it to slide off, a good thing, but piles up in front of the East Door. Please be careful when using this entrance. We are trying to keep it as clean as we can.

Trustee meeting for this month will be on the **First Wednesday of the month at 10:00 a.m.** Everyone is invited. February's Meeting is the 5th.

Be Safe and Happy New Year

Joe

“When you were born, you cried, and the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a way that when you die, the world cries, and you rejoice.” Native American Proverb

Community Drawers News

Well, another year has come and gone and now the experiment called Community Drawers is entering it's 4th year. We have served over 3600 people in Ionia County in the past 3 years. I am so very happy that over the last 3 years we have been successful. We should all be very proud that we have helped so many families, who were in such great need. Thank You.

I will be working on grant requests throughout February. If anyone feels that they would like to help with these grant requests please let me know or if you hear of any more places we can ask for help just let me know.

And again thank you everyone.

Rebecca Brown

Memorial— Stuart Church

Stuart Church passed away peacefully on December 17, 2024. He was a custodian at First United Methodist Church for several years. He loved horses, and owned a stable and trained and raced horses. He was a devoted member of this church before he and Marie moved to Hastings. He faced life's challenges with grace and was an example of kindness to his family and friends. Heaven welcomed a Saint.

Memorial Service will be Saturday, April 26, 2025 at 2:00 at the Erving Cemetery on State Road in Middleville, Michigan.



Reminders

IM KIDS 3rd Meal

- ♦ This is an ongoing mission. We are helping to feed over **838** kids 70% being returned to Ionia Schools 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.

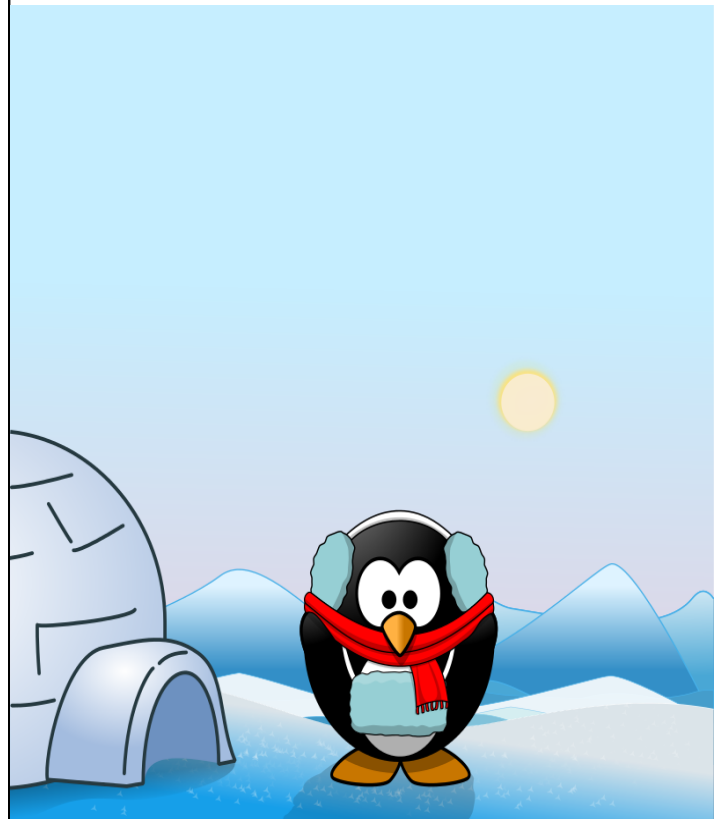


IM SAFE CAC

Ionia Montcalm Secure and Friendly Environment
Child Advocacy Center

February Birthdays

Jack Manicu 02/01
Jan Powell 02/08
Janice Fate 02/18
Dick Christianson 02/24



Prayer Requests

Brent Spencer - Airforce

Phil Kahl
Family of Roberta Sterner
Ethel Clark & Family

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

February Liturgists

02 Deanna Hotchkin
09 Rebecca Brown
16 Jan Powell
23 Eric Asher

February 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5 Trustee @ 10:00 am SPRC Meeting 10:30 in Cafe	6 Community meal at 6:00 p.m.	7	8
9 Noisy Offering	10	11 Moms support group 7:00	12	13 Community meal at 6:00 p.m. AD Board Meeting 6:00 pm	14	15
16 Mission Sunday Enrich	17	18	19 1:30 to 4:30 - Community Drawers	20 Community meal at 6:00 p.m. SPRC Joint 2:00	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 Community meal at 6:00 p.m. DEADLINE FOR NEWS LETTER ITEMS	28	

Finance Report
Special Funds (Designated Giving)

Memorial fund	14,900.66
Board of Trustees	21,500.96
Children's Ministry	8,099.48
Camp & School Scholarships	1,395.07
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	787.34
Community Drawers	4,722.58
Music on the Green	1,279.83
Holiday Concert	3,823.99
Monthly Mission	815.00
General Evangelism	9,193.79
General Outreach	5,797.25
Funeral/Wedding/Flowers	1665.28
IM Kids 3rd Meal	500.00

General Fund (Church Budget)

Income	25,902.04
Expenses	17,819.94
Surplus (Deficit)	8,082.10
Ending Bank Balance	29,070.07

