



KALAMAZOO
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
A Sanctuary in the City: Living Faith



It seemed too much to ask
of one small virgin
that she should stake shame
against the will of God.
All she had to hold to, later,
were those soft, inward
flutterings
and the remembered surprise
of a brief encounter — spirit
with flesh.
Who would think it
more than a dream wish?
An implausible, laughable
defense.

And it may seem much
too much to ask me
to be part of the
risky thing —
God's shocking, unconventional,
unheard-of Thing —
to further heaven's hopes
and summon God's glory.

~ Luci Shaw

DECEMBER 17, 2023 — THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE GATHERING

*Wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here—with whatever joys, questions, or tears you bring today—as we worship God, who welcomes us all!
You are invited to listen for God's Spirit speaking to you through the music of the Prelude, as we prepare our hearts for worship.*

CALL TO WORSHIP

God's steadfast love endures forever, and God's faithfulness to all generations.
Let us worship God.

PRELUDE

The Christmas Song

Mel Tormé

* INTROIT #347

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”

As a cantor concludes Stanza 1, the congregation rises in God's Spirit to sing:

**Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth from the realms of endless day,
that the powers of hell may vanish, as the shadows clear away.**

* OPENING RESPONSES

When the world was dark and the city was quiet, you came and crept in beside us, God.
And few knew. Only those who dared to believe you might do something different.

Will you come again this year, God, into the lonely and fearful darkness where it seems
war won't end, food won't come, the phone won't ring—to bless and embrace us?
**God, will you come into our lives, if we open to you with courage to do something new?
When the world was dark and quiet, you came. Please, do the same this Christmas!**

* HYMN #104

“O Lord, How Shall We Meet You”

Paul Gerhardt

A LITANY FOR ADVENT

As we watch and wait for Christ's coming, we light Advent candles
of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

**God, come and be with us in the shadows of our lives and in a world
not flourishing abundantly, as you created and want it to be.**

Redeem us as we feel the burden of harm we cause, or our complicity.

(silence)

Hear God's promise from the prophet Isaiah:

In days to come, the heights of God's presence
shall be raised above the highest hills and mountains.

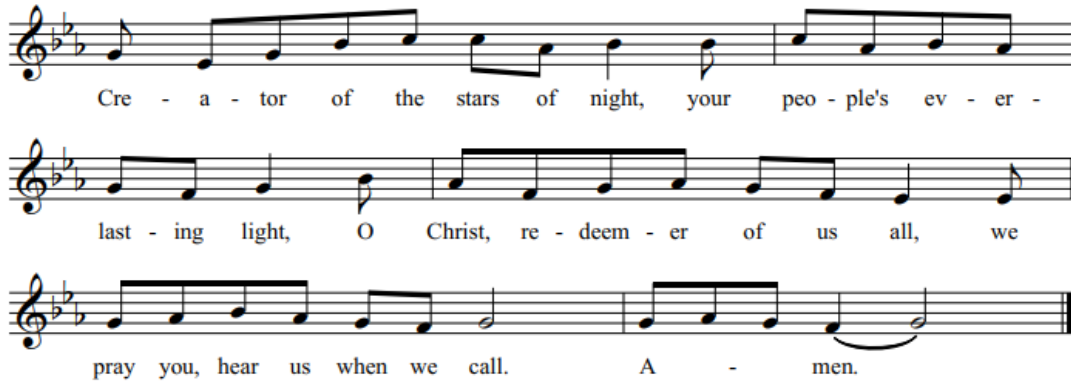
A new shoot shall come out from the stump of God's people.

God's spirit of wisdom, understanding, and authority shall rest on him.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see and ears hear in the world around;

but with righteous grace he shall judge for the poor and meek of the earth.
 The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
 the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
 the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
 and a little child shall tend them all.

(on organ once, then all singing together—#84)



Cre - a - tor of the stars of night, your peo - ple's ev - er -
 last - ing light, O Christ, re - deem - er of us all, we
 pray you, hear us when we call. A - men.

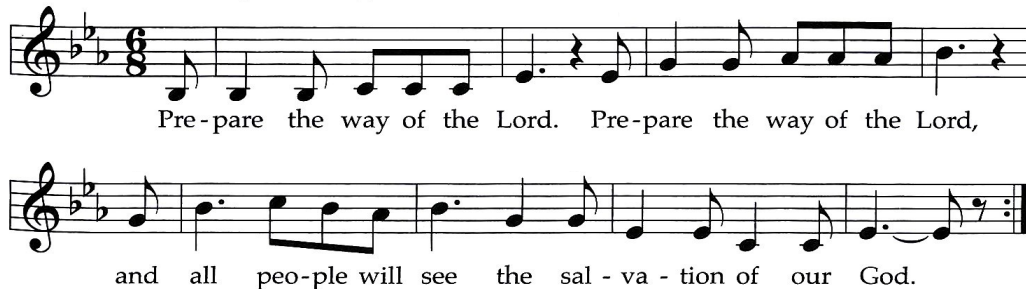
Let us pray. Joyful One, we praise you for your grace that brings new life.
Thank you, for the ways you accept and celebrate who we are.
Thank you, for the many, many ways you live among us.
Teach us to recognize you and to share our joy.
Come, Jesus, we are waiting for you! Amen.

As we light these candles, let us walk in the light of the Lord.
 For Christ shall be known to the ends of the earth,
 and Christ shall be the One of peace.
 The peace of Christ be with you!

And also with you!

(Please stand and take a moment to share Christ's peace with others.)

MUSICAL RESPONSE (# 95) *(on organ once then all sing twice)*



Pre-prepare the way of the Lord. Pre-prepare the way of the Lord,
 and all peo-ple will see the sal - va - tion of our God.

THE WORD

MOMENT WITH YOUNG WORSHIPERS AND CHILDREN'S BLESSING

Children: You are loved!

Congregation: **You are loved!**

(Infants and children up to age 4 are invited to our nursery, Room 208)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God, your word of hope speaks amid our yearning in this Advent season.

Open our ears to hear your voice. Open our hearts to receive your spirit.

Open our minds to understand, that we may trust and live your way of peace. Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Old Testament p. 692

The Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

MAGNIFICAT

Luke 1:46-55

Carl Witt

Congregational Response

My Soul pro claims the glo-ry of the Lord _____ my
spi - rit re - joi - ces in God _____ my sav - ior.

Cantor 1: For God has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day, all generations will call me blessed:

For God has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

RESPONSE

Cantor 2: God has shown mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

God has shown the strength of his arm; he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

RESPONSE.

Cantor 1: God has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.

God has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

RESPONSE.

Cantor 2: God has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he remembered his promise of mercy; The promise God made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children, forever.

RESPONSE.

SECOND READING Luke 1:26-38 New Testament p. 57
For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us,
for the word of God within us,
Thanks be to God.

SERMON “More than a White Elephant”
“And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son ...” (Luke 1:31)

* HYMN #110 “Love Has Come” Ken Bible

THE THANKSGIVING

TIDINGS OF THE CHURCH
We give thanks to God and live faith, offering ourselves through worship,
work, service, and love in all its forms.

OFFERTORY MUSIC *What Child Is This?* Traditional, arr. V. Guaraldi

* OFFERTORY RESPONSE *In the Bleak Midwinter* # 144
**What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;
yet what I can, I give Him: give my heart.**

* OFFERTORY PRAYER (*continuing to pray in unison*)
**God, come to enfold us and surround us; come fill the space between us.
God, be in our life and on our lips; let your love be shown through us.
So may we seek your ways of peace, offering gifts of holy joy to all in the
name of Jesus. Amen.**

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. ...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and forever. Amen.

THE SENDING

* HYMN #121

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Phillips Brooks

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

O Tannenbaum

Traditional German

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

WORSHIP LEADERS

Meredith Alspach

The Rev. Amber Nettleton

The Rev. Dr. Seth Weeldreyer

SOUND TEAM

GREETER

Steve Johnkoski

ACOLYTE

Dave Johnson

READER

Paul Clements

ADVENT WREATH

John, Jenn, Miranda,
and Jackson Fiore

MUSIC

Choir

Guest Musicians:

Mike Olian, Drums;

Scott Robbins, Tenor Sax,

Bob Murray, Bass

Cantors:

Caitlin Brooks, Joseph Sablan,

Pat Stromsta

Autumn, Organist

Dr. Carl Witt, Music Director



FLOWERS IN THE SANCTUARY

Zigrida Petersons was born in Latvia, prior to WWII. As a young girl she was brave and tenacious in the face of Hitler's work camps. Sometime after the war, she moved to the U.S., and graduated from Kalamazoo Central High School. She and her husband visited gardens worldwide. Her life was devoted to making gardens and other beautiful places in nature. Her designs were sought by museums around the U.S.. Zigrida was Linda Digby's second mother, and knows that Zigrida is making those special places from Heaven!

ANNOUNCING ANNAMARIE

Personnel Committee and Session are pleased to announce the hiring of an additional minister to serve among us! Please, find below an introductory bio from the Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom. A couple of months ago, fortuitous circumstances converged. We identified a bit of need for our congregation, and we heard that Pastor Annamarie would be transitioning into a new position with the Presbytery, while looking for a little more church ministry to round out her vocational work. Personnel Committee interviewed Pastor Annamarie, reviewed her background and sermons online, and consulted with other clergy. Personnel Committee brought her contract to Session for consideration in the same format as our arrangements with Pastor Chrissy Westbury and Pastor Amber Nettleton. After review at the meeting in November, Session approved the contract with a starting date of January 2, 2024. We may have already seen Pastor Annamarie introduced in morning worship, and helping to lead our evening Vespers Service on Sunday, December 10. She will preach on Sunday, December 31. Please watch for more information soon to come, providing detail about alignment of pastoral responsibilities, collaboration, and best ways to connect with all of our clergy. Please offer Pastor Annamarie a warm First Pres welcome!

The Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom was born and raised in Grand Rapids, MI. Annamarie loves connecting with people and sharing her love of Bible study, Reformed theology, and the Book of Order. She earned her M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and Master of Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh in 2017. After graduation, Annamarie worked as a licensed social worker in an inpatient psychiatric hospital. Annamarie has also worked in a wide range of ministry settings, including a small rural congregation in Pennsylvania and a large suburban congregation in Washington D.C. Most recently, Annamarie served as the pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Schoolcraft, MI. She also joyfully serves as the Associate Clerk of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. In her free time, she loves to spend time with her husband, Mitch, and daughter, Penelope, at their new home in Portage, MI. She also enjoys reading, crocheting, all things Marvel and Star Wars, and playing Dungeons and Dragons.



DEACON'S PRAYERS



One of the great gifts of a community of faith is that we take time and intention to pray for one another. This week, we pray especially for **JIM YOUNG** and the parish group listed below, that they may feel God's presence and power in their lives. Next week, we will pray for another Deacon and parish group.

Richard Aldrich	Steve Breisach	Karen Jacobs	Jeanene Lewis
Thomas Becker	Evan Breisach	Gretchen Johnson	Katie Long
Tammy Birch	Caroline Breisach	Bruce Johnson	Lee Mizeur
Brett Birch	Colton Card	Susan Kremer	Allison Myers
William Birch, III	Sue Caulfield	George Kremer	Linda Parks
Billy Birch, IV	Eloise Crocker	Curtis Leibbrand	Paul Parks
Mary Lou Boughton	Caroline Ham	Charles Leibbrand	Joseph Sablan
Becky Demcovitz	Eva Hanka		John Sage
Frank Demcovitz	Char Hansen		Johannes Stegmann
			Louise Wright



YOUTH & FAMILIES

Sunday School meets this week immediately after Time with the Children.
Please pick children up in the east transept after worship.

High School Group Christmas Party today, at the church from 5 - 7:00 p.m.

NURSERY

The Nursery is open each Sunday morning for children age 4 and under.
The Nursery will be open for morning worship on December 24th.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

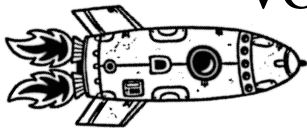
The children's Christmas Program will be held during worship the morning of December 24th. All children and youth who wish to participate should arrive at the 3rd floor Sunday School Room by 9:30 a.m. on the 24th. All are welcome! Please contact Meredith with any questions.

CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING

Every day, neighbors come to our door looking for a little help, a little hope. Some are working with social agencies such as Ministry with Community, ISK, or Urban Alliance. These organizations are limited in resources. We meet needs, as much as we can, with our Pastor's Discretionary Fund which is entirely funded by Christmas Eve offerings.

Need is great this year, and our fund is depleted. We have helped pay security deposits on apartments, avoid eviction, pay fines that prevent folks from receiving services they desperately need, prevented utility shut-offs, and so much more.

Please, help us help our neighbors; give generously to the Christmas Eve offering this year!



VOLUNTEERS FOR NEW YEAR'S FEST

We need two more volunteers for the 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. time period.
You will receive a button for admission to all NYF entertainment venues!
Kelly: kellys@fpckzoo.org or sign up here: <https://tinyurl.com/3dybftbv>

“INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE.

WE ARE CAUGHT IN AN INESCAPABLE NETWORK OF MUTUALITY, TIED IN A SINGLE GARMENT OF DESTINY. WHATEVER AFFECTS ONE DIRECTLY, AFFECTS ALL INDIRECTLY.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



THURSDAY MORNING ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

Our study for Advent is based on the PCUSA study, “Do Not Fear”.

In this study, participants will learn that the command “Do Not Fear” does not mean that there is nothing to be afraid of; it means that God will walk with us through whatever fears we have. The practice presented in this study will show us that we will not eradicate fear, but we can move through it. The four dimensions of the practice that are discussed include tuning into God’s presence, trusting God’s promises, taking one step at a time, and persevering.

Meet at 9:30 for coffee, prayer at 9:45.

pat.stromsta@gmail.com

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL: IN LIGHT & DARKNESS

This year’s Advent Devotional, from Illustrated Ministry, is available in the kiosk in the Gathering Place. *In Light & Darkness* is a weekly devotional based on scripture showing how light and darkness exist together. The short reflections explore the theme of light and darkness in Advent scriptures. How we understand these ideas affects how we view God, our faith, and our world. Inspired by Barbara Brown Taylor’s book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, we re-frame traditional understandings of light as good, and darkness as bad or evil. Instead, we explore how light and dark exist together in balance, not opposition. If you would prefer a digital copy of the devotional, email Pastor Chrissy. *chrissyw@fpckzoo.org*.



NOODLING @ NOON

Noodling at Noon is pausing over the holidays. In January, we’ll begin again with the book *A Lens of Love*, by Jonathan Walton. Walton will also be our McShane Colloquium guest later in March. Watch for more information about Noodling (probably to begin January 9) ... and ask Santa for a copy of the book! Contact Pastor Seth with any questions.

sethw@fpckzoo.org

BUILD A LEGACY THIS CHRISTMAS

Purchase a brick for the Pine Island Chapel! www.thatsmybrick.com/fpckzoo



CTV

We are thrilled to announce the return of our much-anticipated Annual CTV Christmas Shop! On Wednesday, December 20, we will be hosting a free Christmas shop during CTV, providing our guests with an opportunity to select gifts for their loved ones or themselves.

We invite you to be a part of this heartwarming event by contributing to our Christmas shop. Your donations will help us stock the shelves and make this experience memorable for our guests. As many of them rely on walking, biking, or public transportation, we ask for small and practical items that can easily be carried.

Items that would be most helpful include:

- NEW* long underwear (sizes: Medium/Large/XL)
- NEW* hoodie sweatshirts (sizes: large/XL)
- Winter coats (new or gently used)

- Small self-care products (think hotel-sized, if you have some from your travels!)
- Chapstick
- Tarps (size to fit over a tent)
- Insulated metal travel mugs & water bottles

Your generosity and support will make a significant difference in brightening someone’s holiday season. **Donations can be dropped off in the bin outside Meredith’s office any time by December 17. If you have questions, or to coordinate donations, please contact Meredith:**

THERE WILL BE NO CTV DINNER ON DEC. 27

There will be no CTV dinner on Wednesday, December 27. Thank you for all the donations that will help make it a very Merry Christmas for our friends and neighbors. You are loved!



THANK YOU! THANK YOU!



On behalf of our congregation, we extend heartfelt thanks to Craig Kortlandt, Deb Taylor, Janet Todd and Oliver Takuh, who are completing terms of service as elders on Session, and to Suzanne Weeldreyer, Diane White, and Jim Young, who are completing terms of service on Deacons. And thank you, Susan Agostinelli, Logan Brown, Chris Cross, Ginny Dell, Wendy King, and Laurie Tupper who are beginning new terms of service as elders on Session, and thanks to Jan Carpenter, Victoria Coleman, Grace Cook, Lana Griffin, Paul Minert, and Carol and Tom Noland, who are beginning a new term as Deacons. We are reminded that all we do in ministry and mission together arises from the holy gifts inside us all. Thanks be to God for our collective committed efforts!

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS AT FPC

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

10:00 a.m. **Fourth Sunday of Advent, Children’s Program**

7:00 p.m. & 11:00 p.m. **Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion**

Christmas Day MONDAY, DECEMBER 25, 10:00 a.m.

First Sunday of Christmas, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 10:00 a.m.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

- 9:00 a.m. **Adult Choir Rehearsal**, Sanctuary
- 9:30 a.m. **Card Ministry– Cards by donation**, Gathering Place
- 9:30 a.m. **Child Care**, Nursery
- 9:30 a.m. **Gathering Grounds**
- 10:00 a.m. **Worship**, Sanctuary
- 10:15 a.m. **Sunday School:**
Preschool to Grade 6
- 5:00 p.m. **High School Christmas Party**
at the church

MONDAY, DECEMBER 18

- 12:00 p.m. **AA**, Rooms 314/315
- 6:30 p.m. **Deacons**, Pastor Amber's Home
- 7:00 p.m. **Scouts**, Dining Room

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19

- 7:00 a.m. **Men's Fellowship**, Archives
- 11:00 a.m. **Staff Meeting**, Archives
- 12:00 a.m. **Noodling**,
Pausing over the holidays,
returning in January

REGULAR OFFICE HOURS:
MONDAY – THURSDAY
9:00 TO 3:00 P.M.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

- 10:00 a.m. **Archive Work time**, Archives
- 12:00 p.m. **Prayer Service**, Sanctuary
- 5:00 p.m. **CTV-Celebrate the Vision**,
Dining Room, Holiday Party
- 6:30 p.m. **Session Meeting**, Archives

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21

- 9:00 a.m. **Library Work Time**, Library
- 9:30 a.m. **Thursday Bible Study**,
Rooms 314/315
- 12:00 p.m. **AA**, Rooms 314/315
- 4:00 p.m. **Food Addicts**, Rooms 314/315
- 5:30 p.m. **Bell Choir/Red Door Ringers**
Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 7:00 p.m. **Adult Choir Rehearsal**,
Choir Room

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

- 9:00 a.m. **Adult Choir Rehearsal**, Sanctuary
- 9:30 a.m. **Child Care**, Nursery
- 9:30 a.m. **Gathering Grounds**, Gathering Place
- 10:00 a.m. **Worship**, Sanctuary
- 10:00 a.m. **Christmas Joy Offering**, Sanctuary
- 7:00 p.m. **Candlelight Communion**, Sanctuary
- 11:00 p.m. **Candlelight Communion**, Sanctuary

GOOD NEWS

THE TREE IS OVERFLOWING!

Winter hats, mittens, waterproof gloves and warm socks abound for men, women, and children. Our CTV guests will be able to choose items for themselves and their loved ones on the Wednesday before Christmas. There is always room for more! Bring donations to the Gathering Place.



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Autumn , Organist, x214	autumn@fpckzoo.org
The Reverend Dr. Liz Hakken Candido , Parish Associate	elizabeth.candido@kzoo.edu
The Reverend Annamarie Groenenboom	annamariieg@fpckzoo.org
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The Reverend Dr. Seth Weeldreyer , Pastor, x203	sethw@fpckzoo.org
The Reverend Chrissy Westbury , Associate Pastor, x204	chrissyw@fpckzoo.org

South Lobby Receptionists, x221: Bruce Birkel, Bob Brush, Bensan Howard, Sandy Sinotte, Deb Weurding
Custodians: Logan McCafferty, Randy Randt **Library:** library@fpckzoo.org

 **UPCOMING WORSHIP** 

DECEMBER 24
10:00 a.m.
Fourth Sunday of Advent, Children's Program
7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion
The Rev. Dr. Seth Weeldreyer
Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20

DECEMBER 25
Christmas Day
The Rev. Dr. Seth Weeldreyer
Isaiah 52:7-10; John 1:1-14

DECEMBER 31
First Sunday of Christmas
The Rev. Annamarie Groenenboom
Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Luke 2:22-40

JANUARY 7
Epiphany/Baptism of the Lord
The Rev. Chrissy Westbury
Isaiah 60:1-6; Matthew 2:10

*Grounded in living faith, receiving diversity as a gift, we seek to reflect Christ's light in God's world.
Continually discerning God's vision of grace and peace, we share inspirational worship, spiritual nurture,
compassionate service to others, and the pursuit of justice...all to the glory of God.*