



# The Allegan Congregationalist

December 2022

Our church exists to introduce people to Jesus Christ and train those who already know Him.

## Who's Coming to Town?

by Todd Wagner

### Upcoming Events:

- 12/1-12/4 Camp  
Kidwell festival of trees
- 12/4 UMC Carols by  
Candlelight 7 PM
- 12/16 Christmas  
Caroling 5 PM–8 PM
- 12/24 Christmas Eve  
Candlelight Service  
7 PM
- 1/29 FCC Lū'au—  
Save the Date!

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Just last week, we were focused on Thanksgiving and reflected upon our many blessings. Blink once and we've been whisked away into a new season. It is the season of Christmas.

We lament how this season has grown more commercialized. We stress over packed calendars and lists of gifts to buy, shopping, planning trips, and going to parties. Our hearts are heavy that a Merry Christmas wish could be found offensive to someone.

After all, what is Christmas and why is it important? (*I'll give you a hint: the answer is in the first part of that word.*) **Christ.** If you're a believer, then you know where your heart should be focused. Not only in this special season, but every day, we celebrate Christ. The coming of Christmas

allows us to anticipate Advent. This term comes from Greek and Latin meaning "coming, arrival or presence." The advent season celebrates the coming of our Lord and King. A celebration of already, but not yet. We celebrate the promised Messiah who already came to us as a child over 2,020 years ago. A gift was given by God to a broken people to restore what was lost in the garden: that perfect relationship with our God. Not only do we celebrate Jesus as our promised Messiah, but we also celebrate and honor the great sacrifice He made for us by laying down His own life so that we may have eternal life in Him.

Jesus has already come. God laid aside His glory to become human because of



His great love for us, and He will also return one day to restore glory to His people. Jesus is already here, but not yet. For all who repent and believe in Him through faith, He lives within. But as the term Advent signifies, we also celebrate with eager anticipation His second coming, or what I would argue is His third and final coming. He came to us to live among us. He died for us so we may live, and He rose again from the dead coming back to us alive. Before he ascended to heaven, He promised to come once more. 3 **“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and welcome you into My**

## Who's Coming to Town? Musings on the Advent Season (cont.)

**presence, so that you also may be where I am.”** (John 14:3) He is coming back once more. Therefore, we who believe eagerly wait for Him to come back again! There are no truths in this world that can be more wonderful, more exciting than this.

During this season of Advent, take time and be intentional to prepare your heart. Celebrate the hope, love, joy, and peace that Christ brings to all of you. The promise of God is clear:

### **Our hope is established.**

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:2)

### **God's love is seen.**

“For God so loved the world that

He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”

(John 3:16-17)

### **Our joy is complete.**

“You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.” (Isaiah 9:3)

“But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.”

(Psalm 5:11)

### **We rest in His peace.**

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

So, as Christmas approaches and we celebrate this time of advent with thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus, search yourselves and prepare your hearts with anticipation. Who's coming to town? Tradition says Santa Clause, but we know very well that may be our Lord and King Christ Jesus one last time. Praise God & keep watch –

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matthew 24:36)



## Be Faithful

by Carrie Lovett

Another year is coming to a close. For the Congregational Kitchen it was a year filled with abundant food, hard work, truck challenges, sadness, mortgage challenges, faithful volunteers, fundraising, and untold blessings. Throughout it all, we are thankful to God for bringing us thru. He has provided us with the food, hard working faithful workers, and funds needed to keep the lights on. For those of you reading this article you know that 16 years ago the CK was started by Don Lucas. It was Don's vision, coupled with a small group of like-minded people, that first opened the doors of the kitchen and provided a warm meal to anyone who came. No questions asked. This was not a one-time offering of a dinner, but a commitment to the community to be offered every Thursday night. God blessed Don's vision, and with the faithfulness of workers, God grew it into what it is today.

In the past sixteen years, the CK has experienced many changes. Growth is frequently discussed. What strikes me most is the faithfulness of the workers who come on a weekly basis and offer their talents. Over time, the small group has grown bigger and, yes, some of the faces of the original

group have been replaced with new faces. This growth has allowed the vision of feeding those in need to continue.

Sadly, early this year Don Lucas was called home by his Heavenly Father. I am confident that Don was welcomed with words we all long to hear, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." We miss Don's welcoming smile and quick wit. As Don would have wanted, the Congregational Kitchen continued on without skipping a beat. Every Thursday, the kitchen serves a delicious warm takeout meal to anyone who comes. No questions asked. When people ask me about how the CK was started, I not only tell them about Don, but I often ask them if they know the story in the Bible about David and Goliath. You see, in the beginning when we first talked about feeding those in need, we had no idea the growth God had intended for the CK. If we had known then what we do now, we would have been like David's brothers who saw a giant and said that's too big for us. God, in His understanding of who we are, grew us into who we are today. All He asked of us was for us to be faithful in what He has given us to do. Did you know that while we are busy cooking at the



kitchen, the warehouse, located in the industrial park, receives 2 to 3 truck loads of food every Thursday? That food is not only for our kitchen to use, it is sorted, cleaned, divided and readied for distribution every Friday to 16 pantries and 3 homeless kitchens. Those who pick up the food on Friday come from 5 different counties: Allegan, Kalamazoo, Kent, Ottawa, and Van Buren. They are then able to distribute the food and make a difference within their own communities. Simultaneously while we are distributing the food to the pantries, there is a group of volunteers who come to the warehouse to pick up "Backpack" bags. These bags are to be delivered to Allegan public schools. The bags are filled with 2 days worth of non-perishable food items to help the children who qualify with sustainable food for the weekend. Currently there are just under 400 children who qualify for help. We are blessed to have the food to give them, as well as the volunteers who deliver them and

## Be Faithful (cont.)

by Carrie Lovett  
269-512-2214

the volunteers who pack them every other Tuesday morning. Monday morning the warehouse clean room is buzzing with a group of faithful workers who take the commercially packed items that were received on

Thursday's trucks and repackage them into smaller units for Friday's distribution to pantries. It is estimated that the Kitchen along with the pantries are feeding over 7000 people on a weekly basis. One man's vision grown by God.

The Congregational Kitchen is run totally by volunteers. You are welcome to come and partner with us. Do you want to be a difference maker within your community? We covet your prayers, monetary gifts and willing hands.

## Please continue to pray for the Congregational Kitchen

Beloved Father in heaven,  
Almighty God,  
thank you for your  
gracious blessing upon  
the Congregational Kitchen  
and our lives.

May we hear your voice  
and reach for your  
calm steady hand  
and know that you are  
where we are,  
working within us,  
bathed in your everlasting light.

As we lay awake at night  
or get distracted at home  
or close ourselves off  
by worrying  
about the pandemic,  
the state of our nation  
and our own measure,  
may we remember  
that you sanctify us  
more than we understand.

Remind us that,  
incredibly,  
you care about

the details of our lives  
and that you are there  
to pick us up when we fall.

Lord, please  
give us the strength:  
to align our desires  
with yours  
so that we can make a difference  
by being different,  
to answer the calls  
of our brothers and  
sisters in need,  
to act truthfully  
and rid our hearts of malice,  
to show others  
the kind of truth  
that frustrates the  
ways of the world.

Give us what we need in health  
and in the health of our families  
so that when times are tough,  
we may persevere against sin  
and be the soldier of kindness,  
leaving the justice to you  
always remembering that

sometimes the very worst things  
that happen can turn into the very  
best things, through you,  
Lord God.

Lord Jesus, as we navigate this  
world give us a heart of a child  
allowing us to have you be the  
power to works within us.

With your grace living in our  
hearts may we act!  
May we shout that you are Lord!  
That you are the repairer  
of our a brokenness,  
he architect of all  
power and glory!  
You, Lord, have always been,  
are now, and forever will be  
there for us.  
Thank you!

In your precious name  
of Jesus I pray.

Amen

Adapted from *Prayers of the People*—  
Redeemer Presbyterian Church



## A Blizzard Bazaar

by Julie DeHaan

West Michigan received a blast of winter the weekend of Nov. 19. The annual bazaar continued. Fearless organizers and helpers moved tables, baked, set-up wares, and welcomed those bold enough to set-out in the snow.

We had trays of cookies and baked confections. Jewelry sparkled and beckoned to be worn again.

Handmade quilts were stitched with love. Christmas treasures were re-homed.

The bazaar brings different emotions to various participants. I must admit that I measured the

event's success on the amount of funds raised. Incredibly, despite the weather, we grossed over \$1,400. However, this wasn't my success measurement.

I was amazed by the energy and enthusiasm of our volunteers who made it come together. Their bravery to tackle the year's first snow. They inspire me.

I took heart in how the community came out to support us. This was our first year with vendors. It was delightful to learn of their passions in art, scent, and herbs. Our neighbors came to

shop. They told me of how they are touched by our various ministries and wanted to come to support us.

I saw friends who I hadn't connected with in years. It was good to catch up and they made me smile.

My success this year at the bazaar was a deep sense of community brought about by the many hands that took to bring it about and make it work. God made us for this community. I am blessed to be a part of it.



Each week following service, the Women's Fellowship hosts coffee and snacks to help foster community within our church family. How can you participate? Please stay after and join us Sunday mornings. Also, let Julie (269-673-4071) know if you would like to host one Sunday to celebrate a special occasion. We'll be right along side you to help with the coffee, set-up, & clean up.

## Love Offering for Love INC Adopt-a-family

On Sunday, December 4, we will collect a love offering for families adopted through Love INC.

Volunteer shoppers will use these funds to purchase items for the families participating in the Life Skills program. In the past, many of you have kindly shopped on

your own. We hope to have this opportunity once again next year. This year's change is necessitated as the due date falls on 12/8. Thank you for considering to help provide a more joyful Christmas for those in need.



## The Glory of God

Excerpts from Will  
Dickerson's Nov. letter

We have made it to the halfway marker of the first semester. I was supposed to have my fall break the first part of November, but the government canceled it. Instead, we will have an extra week off after Christmas. In this way, the government hopes to save some money in the face of rising energy costs. The thought is that it won't have to heat the schools for a week during the colder time of the year. Since Julia and I had already made arrangements to spend the Fall Break in the town of Nyíregyháza, I took the week off from school. Nyíregyháza is in the northeastern corner of the country.

We are still recovering from recent surgical procedures. While my recovery has been much slower than I was hoping and expecting, I have not had any major setbacks. Julia, too, is healing nicely, albeit slowly. We are still awaiting the results of the histology report and pray the results are good.

Recently, I have been reading through the Gospel of John. In John 11, we find the well-known account of Lazarus. We learn Lazarus was sick (as it turned out, his disease was fatal), and he and his sisters were well-known to Jesus. In versus 5-6, John tells us,

*"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus. So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was."* I had to read this several times to make sure I got it right. John tells us that *because* Jesus loved Martha and Mary, He delayed coming to see them for two extra days! At first, I thought to myself, if this is the way You treat the people You love, no wonder you have so few followers. But this is not the end of the story...

Why did He delay? After all, John tells us that He loved this family. Martha and Mary wanted a miracle. And this is not a bad thing. Jesus performed many miracles. But in this case, Jesus wanted to give them something greater than a miracle. He wanted them to see the glory of God!

When Jesus finally did show up, Martha went out to meet Him at the edge of town. Mary, too, got to the place where Jesus was waiting, crying, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Mary fell at Jesus' feet weeping, Jesus wept, as well. It turns out our God is not some immovable concept. Our God is a person. As John tells us in his first epistle, God is also love.

Moreover, He created us out of that love so that we might be in a relationship with Him.

Jesus told those present to remove the stone in front of Lazarus' tomb. *"Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Then, after giving thanks to God the Father, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.'*" (v. 40)

Then, those who previously had simply been hoping for a miracle witnessed the glory of God! I used to imagine that the "glory of God" was something like a blinding light with beams radiating outward from some sight too beautiful to describe. It turns out, the "glory of God" looks more like an extra from the set of *Zombie Apocalypse*—a former corpse wrapped in bandages walking out of a tomb. It is Death overcome! As Jesus said to Martha (v. 25-26), *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believe in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

I hope that in my desire to see a miracle (especially in our own case), I don't miss the glory of God. You can pray that somehow we would help others see the glory of God.



01 Leon & Sue Belden  
 13 Jeff & Margaret Brown  
 31 Randy & Carol Sneller

04 Barb Polonowski  
 11 Faith Brown  
 14 Hope Shroyer  
 15 Todd Wagner  
     Alaina Letts  
 16 Jody Jackson  
 17 Gary Henningson

21 Gwendolyn  
     Goodenough  
 22 Jan Lovejoy  
 24 Pat Ryan  
 27 Sue Campbell  
 29 Barry Lucas  
     Theresa Prolo  
 30 Lydia Lucas

Please call the office if there is an anniversary  
 or birthday you would like to add to the list.



2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	2 8 Food Warehouse	3
4 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Noon CE Mtg	5 5:30 Women's Fellowship Mtg	6	7 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	8 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	9 8 Food Warehouse	10 8:30 Men's Breakfast
11 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Noon Trustee Mtg	12	13 7 Diaconate Mtg	14 5:45 Prayer Mtg	15 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	16 8 Food Warehouse 5-8 Christmas Caroling	17
18 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	19	20	21 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	22 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	23 8 Food Warehouse	24 7 Christmas Eve Service
25 10:30 Worship 	26	27	28 5:45 Prayer Mtg	29 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	30 8 Food Warehouse	31 <b>NEW YEAR'S EVE</b>

## The First Congregational Church of Allegan



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Website: [fccofallegan.weebly.com](http://fccofallegan.weebly.com)

Office Hours: M, W, F 9 AM—Noon

**Worship with us on Sundays at 10:30 AM!**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



## The Coming King



Beginning 11/27, Advent—  
meaning coming—is a time of  
preparation. A time we prepare  
for the coming of our King, the  
coming of Christ – looking both  
to the past remembering the infant  
child and yearning for the future

when Christ will come again as  
the triumphant King He is.  
“The unexpected Bethlehem King  
is the Once and Coming King, the  
King of the first coming, the King  
of the still coming Second Advent,  
the King coming again to rule the

earth and make all the sad things  
untrue. The wonderland is  
unfolding even now, Kingdom  
coming.” Ann Voskamp

