

The Carillon

February, 2025

First Congregational Church
Your Independent Worship Center
714 Hillcrest Drive - Fremont MI 49412
231-924-4710
congo@fremontfcc.org ~ www.fremontfcc.org



THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

January 27, 2025

DRAFT

Present: Pat Krehn – Moderator, Stacy Church-Vice Moderator, Bill Black – Trustees and Men’s Fellowship, Jean Morehouse – Women’s Fellowship, Pastor Luke Schmalz, Carrie De Mull – Clerk, Jack Butterick - Board of Charitable Giving, Jack Stewart - Technology Board, Ruth Cowles – Deacon’s

I. Meeting called to order at 6:32 pm. Pat gave the opening prayer.

II. Approval of the November 25, 2024 meeting minutes: Ruth moved to approve. Jean seconded. Passed

III. Public comments – None

IV. Board Reports

A. Board of Charitable Giving – Jack Butterick

In September 2024, Charitable Giving requested \$300 for each of the following entities: Insight Pregnancy Center, Empowerment Support, Wellspring Adult Day Care/Reeman CRC. Vera’s House, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Hope 101/Community of God Church. In an effort to reduce spending in the last half of 2024, Trustee’s postponed payment to the first half of the 2025 calendar year. After visiting Community Closet, Pastor Luke asked the Executive Council to consider helping them resolve an urgent need for towels and blankets. The participation from our church was wonderful and in four weeks we donated the following to Community Closet: towels-65, blankets-19, winter clothing-23, bedding-12, and cash of \$40. Well done FCC. Thank you all! Charitable Giving’s Budget for 2025 is \$3000. We will meet in March to award donations for the first half of 2025.

B. Board of Deacon’s – Ruth Cowles

Board of Deacon’s looked into replacing the Christmas trees in the sanctuary during

Advent. 7-foot trees are \$100. We need 9-foot trees. Stacy will look to see if she can find a good deal on 9-foot trees. If she finds 2, she will get them, otherwise it will be tabled until fall. Deacons have been given new contact information for the members and friends of the congregation. Deacon's will start calling to check in with congregation members and friends shortly.

C. Board of Christian Education – Pastor Luke

Crystal is pleased with how things are going. There has been consistent attendance. A pizza party is planned after 13 weeks of participation and attendance. Bible verses continue to be memorized, and prizes given out if children memorize them. As always volunteers are needed. “Noisy Sunday” was fun.

D. Board of Trustees – Bill Black

The actual income for the year was \$142,323.16. Expenses were \$1317,372.38. We borrowed \$8,396.77 from our investments. New trustees: Lou Deleguardia, and Judy Nadeau. Officers now are Bill-chair, Lou-secretary, Jean-Janitorial Chair. The party responsible for the property damage to the front of the church has come forward, and the damage will be fixed by the responsible party. John sent out a letter in December asking for an increase in pledges or monetary gifts. \$8,000 was raised in monetary gifts and \$2000 was raised in increased pledges. Lorene provided a list of the children who worshiped at FCC when they were youth. Trustees have talked about sending out letters to them to raise awareness of the church. This action is being tabled until further discussion can take place. Trustees also talked about selling the property that the church owns just south of the Church. Jean talked to Pam Derks. She gave us some comparable. Once we decide if we want to sell, we can get a survey. She feels we should be able to get \$75,000 for the property. The City of Fremont has no restrictions on the zoning of the property. Will need a congregational meeting to get approval to sell the property. 3 in-house church issues: The entryway heater needs to be checked to see if it is working properly. Paulson Heating will look at it within the week. The Formica in the kitchen is getting fixed. Bats that have been found in the sanctuary have been taken care of.

E. Women's Fellowship-Jean Morehouse

A thank you was sent to Jane for painting the Welcome table. It's beautiful. The Guatemala Soup fundraiser was held and we raised \$740 for the trip. We will be having a Welcome Spring event on a Saturday in May so those that work can attend. We will ask Crystal to be our speaker. We cleaned the kitchen and threw away three big garbage bags full of old food. Three items were tabled: checking the dishwasher to see if it is washing properly, the banner project, and a travelogue presentation. We have made 3 charitable donations with the income from our Plum Pudding/Women's Fellowship craft sale. They are F.I.S.H (Fremont Rotary) \$300, Newaygo County Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect \$300, The Wood Shop \$1000, and the Church's general fund \$2000. Next meeting is February 3 at 10:00 am.

F. Men's Fellowship – Bill Black

The Men's Fellowship had a record-breaking lunch meeting on January 8 with 24 people. Stacy Kennedy from Youth for Christ was the speaker. Pastor Luke made Coney Dogs for lunch. The Devotional was given by Tom Schmidt. Men's coffee is going strong. \$879 has been raised.

G. Technology Board – Jack Stewart

The new website is working great. Lorene has learned how to put the worship service on the website. The disappointing part of the website is the lack of frequent updates. The security system has been giving us some problems. I am in talks with SA Morman about this. The voice over IP is going well. The tech booth volunteers is a pretty big issue. We currently have 7 volunteers with 3 or 4 being on almost every Sunday. Any help from the congregation would be appreciated.

H. Music Committee-Bill Black

The Music Committee has been talking about the funds in their line item. It was agreed upon to use the music funds for the piano player and special music happening on Sunday mornings.

V. Pastor's Report-Pastor Luke

January has been a sleepy month. Tom Schmidt filled on Sunday, January 19, for Pastor Luke who was on vacation. Upcoming event on February 23, the Gideon's are coming to do an evangelism training program. It will be in the evening. Ruth (The Deacon's) will be putting an ad in the Times Indicator advertising our church. The all church Town Hall meeting that was scheduled for February will likely happen in March when more snow birds return. March 9 is the first Sunday in Lent. Jim Rynberg has stepped down from the altar committee. "Noisy Sunday" was a big success. The money raised is currently being counted and the quarterly balance will be going to the Community Closet. The reoccurring theme for this church year is going to be "prayer". Pastor Luke will be focusing on this theme a lot throughout the year. 150th anniversary celebration will be taking a lot of time and talent this year. Pastor Luke is trying to figure out something to take the place of the Family Dinners. Brainstorming about having "small groups" at different intervals throughout the year. This will be brought up at the all church meeting in March to see what the congregation wants to do. Lorene will be taking vacation June 16 – 23.

VI. Acceptance of reports – Bill moved, and Jack Stewart seconded to approve – passed.

VII. Old Business-Stacy brought up the Christmas Eve 2024 service. Attendance in 2024 was lower than in previous years. Any thoughts? A brainstorming session was started. Key concerns: weather was better so more churches had services, and a lot of churches advertised with signs. Tabled until September: Talk about signs for the Christmas Eve service being put out in November along with the Ladies Fellowship Craft Show signs.

VIII. New Business

Leadership changes: None

Pastor Luke said a closing prayer.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm

Next Meeting is February 24, 2025, at 6:30 P.M. in the library.

Respectfully submitted - Carrie DeMull, Secretary

Coffee Hosts Needed:

We are in need of coffee hosts for the last two Sunday's of February and the month of March (and beyond), Men, we welcome you to sign up for a turn as well. Treats do not need to be homemade - they can be purchased.

The sign up sheet is located on the coffee counter in Fellowship Hall.



On this sheet is also a sign up for ALTAR FLOWERS - if you would like to have an arrangement for a special occasion or in honor/memory of a loved one. Jim Rynberg is always willing to put together an arrangement for you at a nominal cost. We would gladly put the information in the bulletin as well. Just let the church office know.

Men's Fellowship Luncheon:

Our luncheon's take place on the first Wednesday of the month. The February lunch is scheduled for Wednesday, February 5 at noon.

Our chef is Lou Deleguardia, devotions will be given by Bill Black and our speaker will be Mat Emerick taking about Performance Arts.

Come! Join us and invite a friend.



Noisy Offering:



Thank you everyone for your contributions to Noisy Sunday. We will be having our Noisy Offering on the fourth Sunday of each month. Be sure to save your coins for our offering.

This quarter our offering will be given to The Community Closet. We collected \$236.00 in our first Noisy Offering. Thank you to Ruth Cowles for counting and rolling all that change!

150th Anniversary:

We are preparing to celebrate our 150th Anniversary! If anyone has pictures, artifacts, etc. please share them as we prepare to celebrate.

The committee: Jim Rynberg, Judy Nadeau, Lou Deleguardia, Pastor Luke.



2025 Directory:

A new church address directory will be made in February. Do you have any changes that should be noted/updated? New phone #, email? etc. Please let Lorene know if you do. You can email your change to congo@fremontfcc.org



Mark Your Calender:

On Sunday evening, February 23 we will have an Evangelism Training with the Gideons.



The Gideons International is an Evangelical Christian association of men and their wives who distribute Bibles and other Christian literature. The Gideons are known for placing Bibles in hotel rooms, but they also distribute them in schools, hospitals, and other places.

What they do:

Spread the Gospel ~ The Gideons' primary activity is to spread the Christian message through personal witnessing and Bible distribution.

Support each other ~ The Gideons encourage each other to do the work of the Lord and strengthen their personal testimony.

Provide Bibles ~ The Gideons distribute complete Bibles, New Testaments, and portions of the Bible in over 108 languages.

Who they are ~ Christian business and professional men, Retired Christian business and professional men, and Wives of Christian business and professional men.

How they got their name:

The Gideons are named after the Biblical figure Gideon, who is depicted in the Book of Judges.

When they started:

The Gideons International was founded in 1899 in Janesville, Wisconsin.

How they get their Bibles:

The Gideons receive freewill offerings from local churches and members.

All Gideons uphold these core beliefs:

The Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God.

Deacon Connections:



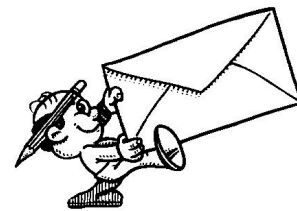
The Deacons (Jim Rynberg, Ruth Cowles, Dave White, Cathy Kellerman, Mat Emerick, Brian Webb) have each been given a list of will be reaching out to all the members and friends of the church. You can expect a call at some point this year.

The goal is to see how their walk with God is going and how the church can serve them.



Reminder:

Board and Committee Chairs and Secretary's:



Did you know you have a mailbox between the two offices? Please remember to check them on occasion. Board and Committee secretary's please include the church office on your emailing's of minutes and agendas.

Walk In/Walk Up Choir:

Our first “Walk Up Choir” began one year ago on the Third Sunday of February, 2024. We continue to sing on the third Sunday of each month and enjoy singing some of our favorite hymns. The hymn(s) are posted in the bulletin and are emailed out with the Sunday bulletin so you know ahead of time what we will be singing. We “walk up” and sing at the designated spot in the bulletin. And return to our seats in the sanctuary. Some love to sing parts and other stick with the melody. If you enjoy singing you are encouraged to “walk up”.



Our Church Family:

Health Concerns:

Susan VandenBelt - Susan has been not feeling well for several months.

Kelly Parks - Kelly is doing well following her fall and partial hip replacement.

Continue to keep in your thoughts and prayers those who are grieving, those who have moved away to be closer to family, those who are home bound, those who are battling cancer, flu, loneliness, those who are away for the winter months, those scheduled for surgery.

Thank you:

Our church has many who frequently offer their time and talent to various things in and around the church. A ‘thank you’ may be overlooked often - but know you are appreciated very much!

Dates to Note:

- February 2 - 10:00 a.m. worship with communion
- February 2 - 11:30 a.m. Deacon’s meeting
- February 3 - 10:00 a.m. Women’s Fellowship Board
- February 5 - 12:00 noon Men’s Fellowship Luncheon
- February 10 - 6:30 p.m. Technology Board
- February 17 - 6:30 p.m. Trustees
- February 23 - 4th Sunday - Noisy Offering
- February 23 - Time TBA - Gideon’s Evangelism Training
- February 24 - 6:30 p.m. Executive Council

Monday/Wednesday/Friday - 9:30 a.m. Men’s Fellowship Coffee Hour

Thursday - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Christmas Crafters

Monday/Wednesday/Friday - 10:00 a.m. Woodshop Open



What do you want? - Pastor Luke

I have been thinking about desire a lot recently for obvious reasons. The start of the year has just passed and I have recommitted to my health journey and desire to lose weight, which of course clashes with my desire to consume all the delicious treats I can find. The second reason I have been thinking about desire is that desire is central to the Christian life and to revitalizing a church. One way to frame the biblical story is that God through the work of Christ changes our desires from sin to himself—growth as a Christian results in a greater desire for God. The Christian life is about wrestling with our desire to do what is wrong and shaping our desire to love God.



Our wants play a role in the work of building a church. Often we desire church growth for the wrong reasons. We want prestige and status, to ensure the institution or building continues, more volunteers, and so on. Church Growth is not ultimately the result of programs, leaders, church style, or anything else. Growth comes from God's divine work and may not look like what we expect. The key to church growth is an increase in our desire to know and love God and an increase in our desire for our community to know and love God. That alone brings growth.

The problem with desire is that it is hard to control and often our desires are unclear. What we truly desire is different from what we think we want. And sometimes this is a good thing, and sometimes not. We struggle to know ourselves and our desires. So we say we want something and may even believe it but our actions say that is not true. There have been many times when I say I want to be healthier, lose weight, etc. My actions reveal that I don't because my actions are overeating, poor food choices, and lack of exercise. We struggle with what we desire, what we should desire, and the gap between the two.

Change is possible. We can reform our desires, to better match our values. The first step in changing our desire is being honest about what we want. The first step of A.A. admitting the problem. Once we see the desire, which may be very unpleasant, we can start to work on changing it. Step two is to find the reason you don't want to desire what you desire. And name your new desire. Step three is to change your actions. Humans are very good at saying all sorts of things. We even believe what we say. But it is actions that reveal our heart. And as we begin to act differently our desire will start to change.

This is true of anything we want to change. But when it comes to changing our desire for God, we have some help. That comes through the power of prayer and the Holy Spirit. God desires us to become Holy. And when we pray for God to change our hearts, church, and community. God will act by drawing us near to Himself and changing our hearts. The Holy Spirit fills us and empowers us to change. And this change brings growth. As we look at month two of the year we need to ask ourselves what we want. Our desire is what we will get. And because we are sinful what we get may be pretty awful. But our desire can change and be aimed at God. Psalm 37:4 "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."



A Prayer for Revival

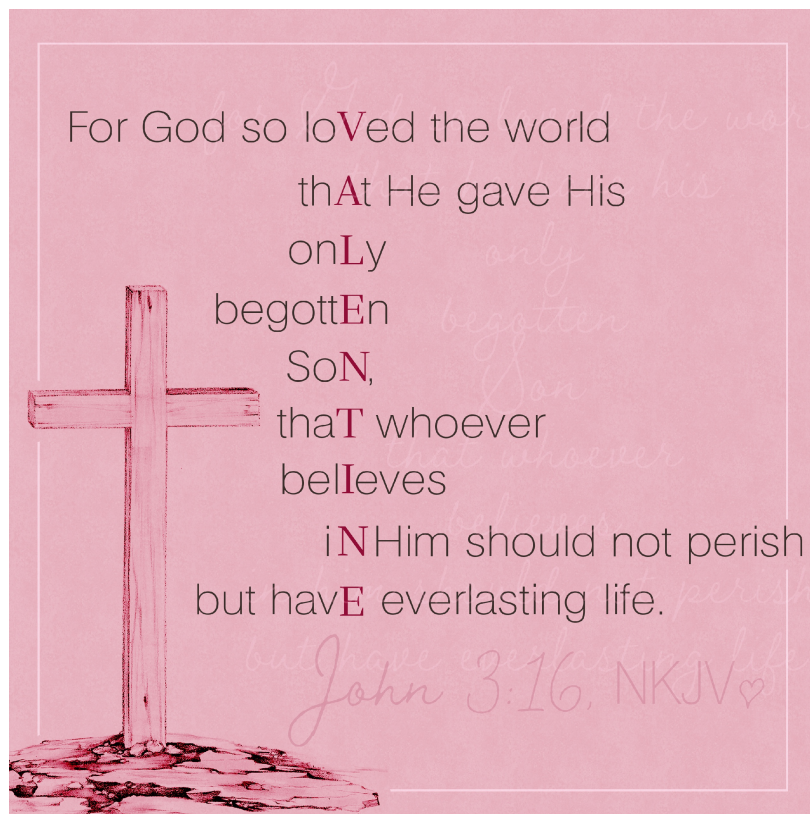
Almighty God, I come before you today with a humble heart, acknowledging your grace and love. Your Word, declares your desire for all to experience salvation. I thank and worship you for this gift.

Today, I ask you to breathe new life into my church. Grant us the grace to reach Fremont, sharing the Good News. May a renewed passion ignite within us, a fervent desire to spread the message of hope and salvation.

Help me to deepen my love for you, our Heavenly Father, and love for my neighbors. May I see the people of Fremont through your eyes, recognizing their worth and longing for their salvation as you do. Empower me with the Holy Spirit, filling me with the strength, wisdom, and courage to proclaim your gospel with clarity and conviction.

My deepest desire is to see the people of Fremont and the surrounding communities accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. May I play a role in bringing this transformation to pass. Ignite the first of revival within my heart and my church. May I shine as a beacon of hope, drawing people to you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, my Savior I pray. Amen.



*TODAY I RECEIVED THIS EMAIL FROM Love, INC -
How wonderful it is to know others are praying for staff and members of the First
Congregational Church.*

*Read thru the prayer that they said for the area churches they were praying for - what a
beautiful prayer.*

January 31, 2025



Hello, First Congregational Church,

You are part of our prayer focus for the month of February. Our staff and prayer ministry feel it an honor to pray specifically for you. We pray based on Numbers 6:24-26. May the LORD bless your staff and congregation. May He shine His face upon each of you!

The attached sheet will show you the Scripture's we pray as well as all of the churches on our focus this month.

We currently have Pastor Luke Schmalz & staff Lorene Witte for First Congregational Church. May the LORD strengthen you both, mightily, as you help shine His Light in the darkness.

Please let us know if you have any specific prayer needs, and/or any staff updates for your church.

Blessings,
Kelly Murphy
Love INC of Newaygo Co. Ministry Assistant
(231) 652-4099 ext 131

February 2025 Churches & Love INC Affiliates

*Lord, please bless each of these churches, the Pastors, staff, all the congregation members and the neighbors. Shine your face upon them, LORD turn your face to them and give them peace.
Numbers 6:24-25*

(First Baptist Church of Fremont, First Baptist Church of Newaygo, First Baptist Church of Woodland Park, First Christian Reformed Church, First Congregational Church, First Reformed Church)

May the peace of Christ would rule in (First Baptist Church of Fremont) heart (Colossians 3:15). Bless (Pastor Dr. Steve Witter, staff Cindy Greeting); LORD help them be unified and to see your provisions.

Lord that the congregation of (First Baptist Church of Newaygo) would know that Your name is a strong tower (Proverbs 18:10). Put a hedge of protection on (Pastor Tim Shaw, staff Daniel, Bonnie & Andrea) and bring them joy in their service.

That (First Baptist Church of Woodland Park) Would never tire of doing what is right (2 Thessalonians 3:13). Bless (Pastor Denise Suttles and Duane Roberts Jr.) and encourage them in their work for you LORD.

May the congregation of (First Christian Reformed Church) not put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but instead put their hope in You (1 Timothy 6:17). LORD, please provide good

counsel for (Pastor Drew Sweetman, staff Jonathan & Becki), bless them, and show them your favor.

May the congregation of (First Congregational Church) realize in full that all scripture is breathed out by you, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). Lord, we ask you to protect (Pastor Luke & staff Lorene) from the enemy and help them be mighty in your Spirit.

That all the members of (First Reformed Church) would grow this year in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Peter 3:18). Encourage (Pastor Joel, staff Luke, Sarah & Kenzie), help them see where you are working LORD.

That these congregations would know and rely on the love you have for them, LORD (1 John 4:16) and let them be known for their love. Strengthen (each of the pastors and staff) Give them wisdom and discernment.

May (the Pastors, elders and staff of these churches) have gracious speech (Colossians 4:6). May their words be edifying to you LORD.

Let (The members of these Churches) not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time they will reap a harvest if they do not give up (Galatians 6:9). Encourage and refresh them.

(The depressed) would be encouraged that as they confess their sins, you are faithful and just, and You will forgive their sins, and cleans them from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

(The senior saints in these churches) would continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving (Colossians 4:2). That each of these churches would be called a house of prayer (Isaiah 56:7)

(The evangelistic people of these churches) would have gracious speech (Colossians 4:6). Soften the hearts LORD that would hear your WORD.

(Each of these churches) would forgive as you, O LORD have forgiven them. (Colossians 3:13)

(The person with a bitter heart) would understand in new and deeper ways this year that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ, and that through Him, the law of the Spirit of life sets us free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2)

(The teenagers in the church) would not imitate what is evil but imitate good. (3 John 11)

(That everyone) would cast their cares up You because You care for them. (1 Peter 5:7)

(That those who are new in Christ) would not be spiritually gullible. (2 Timothy 4:3)

When (Pastors) are burdened or grieving, may they know that You heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)

May (the proud person) be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. (James 1:19)

(That each pastor and every member) would not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of their mind. (Romans 12:2)