



Children's pageant

First (Park) Congregational Church
Sunday, December 21, 2025
The Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love

Welcome to First (Park) Congregational Church!

We pray this worship service will be a blessing to you. While at Park Church if you need directions to the rest rooms, classrooms, fellowship spaces, or you need any help at all, please speak to a greeter or usher and we will do our best to assist you. The Sanctuary and Merriam Hall are equipped with the Loop System and other hearing-assist devices are available from an usher. The wifi password is parkchurchguest.

Our Congregational Commitments:

Vision Statement

...to build a community of relentless compassion and courageous hope, where all are seen and known, and the God of extravagant Love is revealed.

Inclusion Statement

As Jesus demonstrated by his life and teachings, we fully welcome into the life of Park Church and value all people regardless of beliefs or doubts, age, race, ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical, intellectual or emotional ability, or economic status. Park Church is a place where all are welcome and equal. We value and celebrate the rich diversity of all God's creation. *(adopted 2015, updated 2020 and 2025)*

Safe Church Statement

Park Church is a designated Safe Church of the United Church of Christ. Park Church is committed to create a safe environment for all members, attendees, and visitors, especially children and youth, and to address any concerns about abuse, harassment or misconduct.

Accessible to All (A2A) Statement

Park Church welcomes people of all abilities and disabilities into the full life of the congregation. Called to participate in Christ's ministry, we pledge to continue expanding our views and attitudes as we evolve to meet the needs of our church and community.

In this way, Park Church is fully committed to being *Accessible to All*. *(adopted 2025)*

The bulletin cover art: *Advent Journey*, Mike Moyers, 2014 (used with permission)



Click the QR code for the current Congregationalist.

Order of Worship for December 21, 2025

Gathering and Centering 10:20am

Announcements and Sanctuary Worship 10:30am

The + symbol indicates standing in body or in spirit.

Words in **bold type** are spoken or sung in unison.

Gathering Music

Phyllis Ann Miner, harp

Welcome

Rev. Darryl Kistler

Ringing of the Chimes

Prelude

Steven B. Smith, organ
Of the Father's Love Begotten
Charles Callahan

+ Invocation and Our Savior's Prayer

Reading Responsively

One: Let us pray ...

All: Gracious God, we thank you for the love that brought Christ into our lives, for the hope his birth represents, and for the peace that his presence brings. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may our hearts and minds draw closer to you, to one another, and to your creation.

One: This we offer, along with our prayers and meditations for peace in our world, peace in our community, peace in our relationships, and peace in our lives. And we do so in the name of the Christ Child, who grew up and taught us to pray these words ...

All: Our Father/Mother/God, 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 forever. Amen.

+ Hymn of Praise - No. 88 (vs. 1, 2, 6, 7)

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
Tune: VENI EMMANUEL

(text continued on bulletin page 4.)

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

2. O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
who orderest all things mightily:
to us the path of knowledge show;
and teach us in her ways to go.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

6. O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

7. O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
bid envy, strife, and discord cease;
fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Advent Theme

The Chancel Choir
When God is a Child
Arr. Patrick Coyle

Lighting of the Advent Candle of Peace

Katie Fox, Rachael Johnson,
Rebecca Johnson, and Jessica Kenworthy

We have lit three candles of Advent: Hope, Peace, and Joy. Today, we light the candle of Love.

God loves us more than we can imagine. Even when we cannot feel it, God is in our very soul, and every heartbeat and breath reminds us that we are full of God's Love without trying. Everywhere we go in life, God is always reaching out to us with compassion, empathy, and grace. We are loved and held close by our loving God.

The babe of Bethlehem was nurtured in Love by his mother, Mary, and his father, Joseph. He intuitively knew his Heavenly Parent, Abba God, was always with him. When the child grew

up, Jesus based the whole of his ministry on Love saying famously, we are to “love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your mind;” and we are to “love our neighbor as we love ourselves.” It is by following in Jesus’ commandment to Love that we are recognized as followers of Jesus.

We add our prayer of Advent Love with that of the great poet of the Hebrew Bible, found in Psalm 89:

**All: I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.
I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.
Happy are the ones who know the festive shout,
who walk, O Lord, in the light of your love.**

Advent Response

When God is a Child
Brian Wren, Joan Collier Fogg, arr. Patrick Coyle

4. Love is a flame that burns in our heart.

5 Je - sus has come and will nev - er de - part. When

9 God is a child there's love in our song. The

13 last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and

17 none shall be a - fraid.

The musical score is written in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It consists of five staves of music. The lyrics are placed below the notes. The first staff starts with a 4-measure rest followed by the lyrics '4. Love is a flame that burns in our heart.' The second staff starts with a 5-measure rest followed by 'Je - sus has come and will nev - er de - part. When'. The third staff starts with a 9-measure rest followed by 'God is a child there's love in our song. The'. The fourth staff starts with a 13-measure rest followed by 'last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and'. The fifth staff starts with a 17-measure rest followed by 'none shall be a - fraid.' The final note of the fifth staff is a whole note with a fermata.

THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT: A Godly Play Nativity
featuring the children and youth of Park Church

Godly Play Wondering Questions

I wonder ...

What part of the story did you like best?

What part of the story is most important?

What part of the story are you in?

What part of the story is about you?

What could we leave out and still have all the story we need?

The Town of Bethlehem

O Little Town of Bethlehem

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

The Holy Family

A Soundscape of Mary and Joseph's Walk to Bethlehem

The Babe of Bethlehem

Away in a Manger

**Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

The Shepherds

While Shepherds Watched Their Flock

**While shepherds watched their flock by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.**

The Magi

We Three Kings

**We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar;
field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.
O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright, westward leading,
still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.**

We invite any child or youth present to come to the chancel area to be a star and surround the Nativity as we sing Silent Night. (parents/guardians are welcome to join!)

The Star

Silent Night

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

The Gifts We Bring

Children of the Worship Center
Rachel Mills, director
Our Gifts of Love We Bring
(Tune of *The Little Drummer Boy*)

*Come, they tell us; our teacher has been born!
Our gifts of love we bring; We are to share them.
So to honor God, when we drum.*

*Little babies have gifts within them too;
Even the smallest, even the poorest.
We're all God's children. We can drum*

*Mary trusted. I can trust God, too!
If I give myself, I can make peace on Earth.
So we sing for you, and we drum!*

Invitation to Generosity and Stewardship

Offertory Music

The Chancel Choir
I Wonder As I Wander
(Music given in Memory of Mary Forslund)
Arr. Kyle Pederson

*I wonder as I wander out under the sky
how Jesus the Savior had come for to die;
For poor orn'ry people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.*

*How I, a mere mortal, may look up in awe
as Bethlehem's star beckons me through the dawn.*

*It shines on the manger, the Prince of all peace,
and bids me to wonder, "Is this gift for me?"*

Emmanuel (God with us)...

*The gift in the manger is given for all,
the strong and heroic, the lost and the small.
Christ bids to our stone hearts, "come soften and give,"
and offers his own heart so others may live.*

Emmanuel...

*I wonder as I wander out under the sky
how the light of the heavens is born in this child.
The universe dances with glory and grace
and I gaze in the manger and see love's face.*

+ Doxology

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow
Tune: OLD HUNDREDTH

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures high and low;
Praise God in Jesus fully known:
Creator, Word, and Spirit one. Amen.***

+ Prayer of Dedication

Reading in Unison

**Thank you, God of Love and Promise, for your steadfast love that endures forever.
We are ever grateful for the spirit of generosity that is aroused in us by the birth of
the Christ Child into the world. May our gifts represent the spirit of love and joy,
peace and hope being birthed in us, for the sake of the children of our community
and all the children of the world. Amen.**

+ Hymn - No. 119

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
Arr. David Willcocks

1 Hark! The her - ald an-gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king.
2 Christ, by high - est heaven a-dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,
3 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righ-teous-ness!

Peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"
 late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of the vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all he brings, risen with heal - ing in his wings.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise; join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God - head see; hail the in - car - nate de - i - ty,
 Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,

with the an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 pleased in flesh with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el.
 born to raise us from the earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.

Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born king!"

+ Common Commission

Reading in Unison

Let us now go forth into the world in peace; being of good courage; holding fast to that which is good; rendering to no one evil for evil; strengthening the faint hearted; supporting the weak; helping the afflicted; honoring all people; loving and serving the Lord and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Postlude

Steven B. Smith, organ
O Love How Deep, How Broad, How High
 Michael Burkhardt

Thank you for joining us this morning!

We'd like to know that you were here, answer any questions you have, and support you in prayer. Please fill out the information card in the pew rack and place it in the offering plate.

Following Worship

Coffee Fellowship in Merriam Hall

Piñata and Hot Chocolate in Merriam Hall after worship

Drop off socks to stuff our Christmas Offering stockings

Pick up your copy of the Park Church Advent Devotional for this week

Serving With You Today

Greeters: Kevin Larr, Diane and Roger LaWarre and Sandy Kittendorf

Ushers: John Miller, Jim Butler, Cindy Dexter, Kathy Miller, Susan Sochanek, Harlan Wilson.

Audio/Video: Sam Begay-Johnson, Kevin Arnett, Andrew DeBoer

Flower Care: Marcia Streeter

Christmas Offering

Community and Service Center

ongoing through December 31

We are thrilled this year to name the Community and Service Center as our 2025 Christmas Offering Recipient. The Community and Service Center is a collaborative ministry of Dégagé, Mel Trotter, and seven downtown churches (including Park Church!). It is a weekday center established for Heartside neighbors to gather for warmth, rest and a meal. It is a service center connecting clients with essential services like securing safe housing, medical referrals, and employment. The Community and Service Center is located at Westminster Presbyterian Church where it will operate M-F from 8:00-3:00 through to March 31, 2026.

Our Christmas Offering is part of a coordinated effort to expand the Community and Service Center to a year-round program in a permanent home with professional staffing. You can make your contribution by clicking on the QR code or by using one of the designated envelopes in the Narthex.

PLEASE NOTE!: One of the immediate needs for the Community and Service Center guests is socks: Warm, dry...NEW socks for men and women! Let's fill the stockings in Allinder Commons with new socks in adult sizes and make the winter months just a little bit easier for our neighbors.



Joys and Concerns

Ron Bickel passed away on Tuesday, December 9 at the age of 86. Ron and his wife Gail have been members of Park Church since 1963. Services have taken place. Condolences may be sent to Gail Bickel, 3072 Bonita Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508.

Tom Vandenberg passed away on Saturday, December 6 at the age of 83. Tom has been a member of Park Church since 1966. Services are planned for later date and will be announced. Condolences can be sent to his daughter Jennifer's family. Jennifer and Mark Hagemann and Mallory and Avery at 289 Lloyd Court, Middleville, MI, 49333-8117.

Please pray for those navigating illness/treatment including: Ruth McCarty

Military Personnel: Jesse Campbell, Devon Goetz & Andy MacGregor, and Matthew Quick.

Pastoral care is always available. Contact Pastor Darryl at dkistler@parkchurchgr.org.

Christmas Worship Service Schedule

Christmas Eve Meditative Service: Wednesday, December 24 at 4:00pm

Join us in Thompson Chapel for a meditative service of scripture, poetry, song, and communion for those who wish to be more introspective on Christmas Eve. The Park Church String Quartet-in-Residence and the Choral Scholars will participate.

Christmas Eve Festival Service: Wednesday, December 24 at 9:00pm

This Sanctuary service celebrates the Christ Child entering into our world with joy and thanksgiving. The Chancel Choir, Jubiloso!, and the Brass Quintet-in-Residence will join us.

The Sanctuary Flowers

The flowers at the Pulpit

In memory of our parents Robert & Elizabeth and David & Shirley.
Given by Cheri and Scott Stannard.

The flowers at the Lectern

In honor of our grandchildren especially Edda on her 10th birthday.
Given by Jan and Wayne Edwards.

If you would like to dedicate Sanctuary flowers, email Marcia Streeter. mabiti1@gmail.com

This Week at Park Church

- Mon. Dec. 22 at 7:00pm *All is Calm, All is Bright* Advent devotional discussion group
Wed. Dec 24 at 4:00pm Christmas Eve Meditative Service in Thompson Chapel
at 9:00pm Christmas Eve Festival Service in the Sanctuary
Sun. Dec 28 at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship - Service of Lessons and Carols
Coffee Fellowship before and after worship in Merriam Hall
Search for Angels High and Low!

Please Note: Between Christmas and New Years, the church office is closed. The staff will be working irregular hours both in the building and remotely. If you are stopping by, please give us a call at 616-459-3203 or send an email to office@parkchurchgr.org ahead of time so we can make sure someone is available to let you in. Messages are monitored all hours and your calls will be returned promptly. (Regular in-person office hours resume on January 5.)



Click the QR code to sign up for Degage cooking and serving.

Ministerial and Office Staff:

Rev. Darryl Kistler, Senior Minister

dkistler@parkchurchgr.org

Rev. Dr. Patrick Coyle, Minister of Music

pcoyles@parkchurchgr.org

Peter Smith, Spiritual Formation & Education Minister

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Terrie Hunter, Congregational Life Coordinator

thunter@parkchurchgr.org

Julie Anderson, Finance Director

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Camille DeBoer, Communications Coordinator

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Tim Persenaire, Lead Custodian

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Marty Butler, Parish Life Assistant

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Judi Stroh, Office Administrator & Event Coordinator

jstroh@parkchurchgr.org

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:00 - 3:00

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www.facebook.com/parkchurchgr

The wifi password is parkchurchguest.



Access the online donor and payment portal by using the camera on your phone and clicking the link that appears.