

First (Park) Congregational Church

Sunday, December 7, 2025

The Second Sunday of Advent: **Peace**



## ***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: *Be Thou My Vision*, Mike Moyers, 2013 (used with permission)



Click the QR code for the current Congregationalist.

Order of Worship for December 7, 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, piano

Welcome

Rev. Darryl Kistler

Ringling of the Chimes

Prelude

The Choral Scholars

*Sanctus*

Kyle Pederson

*Sanctus Deus. Holy, holy, holy.*

*Pleni sunt coeli et terra, gloria.*

*(Heaven and earth are full of your glory.)*

*Hosanna in excelsis, gloria.*

*(Hosanna in the highest.)*

*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.*

*(Blessed are you who comes in the name of the Lord.)*

*Sanctus. Holy.*

+ Prayer of Invocation

Reading Responsively

Gregg Hampshire, liturgist

One: God of peace,

God of the wolf and the lamb,

God of the goat and the leopard, we gather here to worship you—

**All: you who bring enemies together,**

**you who combine earth and heaven,**

**you who know nothing of impossibility.**

**Expand our hopes and our imaginations**

**so that new dreams**

**of peace and unity might arise.**

**May the hearing of your word,**

**the singing of sacred songs,**

**and the blessing of this community**

**awaken us anew to your presence.**

**With hope, peace, joy, and love we pray. Amen.**

1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come; vir - gin's  
2 From God's heart the Sav - ior speeds; back to  
3 Now your man - ger, shin - ing bright, hal - lows  
4 Praise we sing to Christ the Lord, vir - gin's

son, make here your home. Mar - vel now, O  
God his path - way leads; out to van - quish  
night with new - born light. Night can - not this  
son, in - car - nate Word! To the ho - ly

heaven and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth.  
death's com - mand, back to reign at God's right hand.  
light sub - due; let our faith shine ev - er new.  
Trin - i - ty praise we sing e - ter - nal - ly.

Advent Theme

The Chancel Choir

*When God is a Child*

Arr. Patrick Coyle

Lighting of the Advent Candle of Peace

Emma Oonk and Marcus Hoekstra

Last week, we lit the candle of Hope. Today, we light the candle of Peace. At its basic level, Peace is much more than lack of conflict. As the Jewish sage Abraham Joshua Heschel once said, "Peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be amid those things and still be calm in your heart."

Jesus told the crowds in the Sermon on the Mount that God’s blessing is upon those who make peace. Peace cannot be made unless we are in the world. Jesus made peace by entering the confounding conflicts of life with a forgiving, merciful heart. This is the Peace Christ gives us. So that when overwhelming obstacles stand in our path, we may not despair; that when we feel like we’re in free-fall, we may trust; that when life is chaotic, we remember to breathe; that when terror is all around us, we may still savor the beauty of creation.

We add our prayer of Advent Peace with that of the great poet of the Hebrew Bible, found in Psalm 85:

One: Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,  
 for God forever speaks peace to God’s people,  
 to the faithful, to those who turn to God in their hearts.  
 Surely salvation is at hand for those who are humble before God, that God’s glory will dwell in our land.

All: **Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;  
 righteousness and peace will kiss each other.  
 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,  
 and righteousness will look down from the sky.**

Advent Response

*When God is a Child*

Brian Wren, Joan Collier Fogg, arr. Patrick Coyle

2. Peace is a cord that cir - cles the earth,  
 5 giv - ing a pro - mise of safe - ty and worth. When  
 9 God is a child there's peace in our song. The  
 13 last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and  
 17 none shall be a - fraid.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 3:1-10

First Nations Version: an indigenous translation  
Gregg Hampshire, liturgist

In those days, the Word of God came to a man named John in the desert of Judea. He began to speak a message that was loud and clear. “It is time to return to righteous ways of living, asking for forgiveness, forgiving others; for it is time to begin following God’s path which is close.”

The Prophet Isaiah told us about him long ago when the prophet said, “a voice is crying out in the desert, ‘Make the path of God straight and clear for the coming Anointed of God.’”

John wore clothes made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. The food he was known to eat were grasshoppers and wild honey.

People from throughout Judea, from Jerusalem, and all around the Jordan River region came to John to confess their immoral ways and their broken hearts, and John baptized them in a purification ceremony in the Jordan River.

When John saw that some religious authorities came to be baptized, he said to them, “You brood of poisonous vipers! Who warned you to run and hide from the storm that is coming soon? You are like tress without fruit. Prove to others, by the way you live, that you have changed your hearts and lives. And don’t even think about saying to yourselves, “Abraham is our father.” Don’t you know that God is able to raise up Abraham’s children from stones? The ax is already at the root of the trees, and the ones that have no good fruit will be cut down and tossed into the fire.

**One:** The Word of God for the People of God...

**All:** Thanks be to God.

Anthem

The Chancel Choir  
Christine Krive, oboe  
*No Wind at the Window*  
Arr. Patrick Coyle

*No wind at the window, no knock on the door;  
No light from the lampstand, no foot on the floor.  
No dream born of tiredness, no ghost raised by fear;  
Just an angel and a woman and a voice in her ear.*

*Oh, Mary, oh, Mary, don't hide from my face!  
Be glad that you're favored and filled with God's grace.  
The time for redeeming the world has begun,  
And you are requested to mother God's son.*

*This child must be born that the kingdom might come:  
Redemption for many, destruction for some.  
Both end and beginning, both message and sign,  
Both victor and victim, both yours and divine.*

*No payment was promised, no promises made.  
No wedding was dated, no blueprint displayed.  
Yet Mary, consenting to what none could guess.  
Replied with conviction, "tell God I say yes."*

Sermon: *Desert Spirituality of Peace*

Pastor Darryl

Meditation

Steven B. Smith, organ  
*Prepare the Way, O Zion*  
Robert A. Hobby

**Sacrament of Holy Communion**

*Invitation to the Table and Words of Institution*

*Serving of the Bread and Cup*

Steven B. Smith, organ  
*Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*  
Paul Manz

*Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*  
Charles Callahan

*Prayer after Communion/Our Savior's Prayer*

concluding, the congregation prays in unison

**...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.**

*Prepare ye the way of the Lord!  
Make straight in the desert a highway for our King.  
Come greet the Messiah; raise your voice and sing.  
Prepare ye the way of the Lord!*

Invitation to Generosity and Stewardship

Offertory Music

Jason Coffey, baritone

*O Holy Night*

Adolphe Adam

*O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,  
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth;  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
'Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;*

*Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices!  
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.  
O night, O holy night, O night divine.*

*Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming;  
With glowing hearts by his cradle we stand:  
So, led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,  
Here come the wise men from Orient land,  
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger,  
In all our trials born to be our friend;*

*He knows our need, To our weakness is no stranger!  
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!  
Behold your King! your King! before him bend!*

*Truly He taught us to love one another;  
His law is Love and His gospel is Peace;  
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,  
And in his name all oppression shall cease,*

*Sweet hymns of joy in grateful Chorus raise we;  
Let all within us praise his Holy name!*

*Christ is the Lord, then ever! ever praise we!  
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!  
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!*

+ 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 Responsively

One: God of new directions, we have been called to prepare the way—not with empty words, but with changed hearts and lives.

All: In this season of turning and anticipation, we offer these gifts as signs that we long to live in your path. Use them and use us to bear fruit worthy of your coming to earth: fruit of justice, compassion, hospitality, and peace. Let our generosity reflect the nearness of your kingdom and the urgency of your call. In the wilderness of fear and want, may this offering clear a path for hope and peace to be seen, known, and shared. In the name of the one who is coming and yet is already moving among us—Christ, our Lord. Amen.

+ Hymn - No. 132 (see bulletin page 10)

*Good Christian Friends, Rejoice*  
Tune: IN DULCI JUBILO

+ 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  
*On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry*  
Charles Callahan

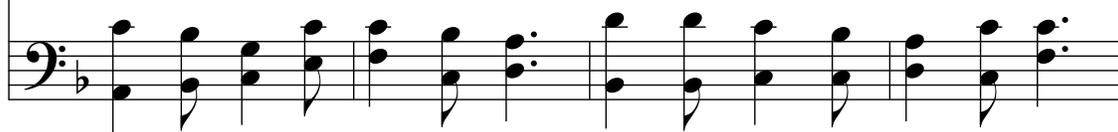
# 132 Good Christian Friends, Rejoice



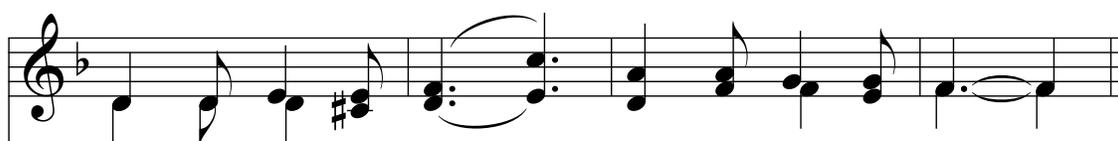
1 Good Chris-tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;  
 2 Good Chris-tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;  
 3 Good Chris-tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;



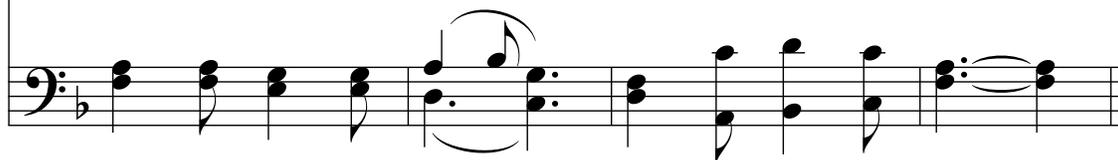
give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to - day;  
 now ye hear of end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ was born for this!  
 now ye need not fear the grave: Je - sus Christ was born to save!



ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man-ger now.  
 He has o-pened heav-en's door, and we are blest for - ev - er - more.  
 Calls you one and calls you all to gain the ev - er - last - ing hall.



Christ is born to - day!	Christ is born to - day!
Christ was born for this!	Christ was born for this!
Christ was born to save!	Christ was born to save!



Carols using two languages, like this one dating from at least the 14th century, belong to a special group called "macaronic," the original languages here being German and Latin. Though the present version is only in English, it is sung to the traditional German folk melody.

## ***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

P.O.P Table Holiday Poinsettia information and orders

Pick up your copy of the Park Church Advent Devotional for this week (and last week!)

11:45 Youth Group meeting

11:45am Melodia/Camerata rehearsals

### **Cookie Walk and BBQ Lunch: today after worship in Merriam Hall**

Allinder Ten will sponsor the annual Cookie Walk and BBQ Lunch on December 7 after worship. The lunch is \$5.00. Cookies will be prepackaged in small assortments for \$3.00 a piece...\$10.00 if you buy 4. (cash is appreciated).

### **Advent @ the P.O.P. Table**

Pick up your very own personal Park Church Advent Devotional each week of Advent. Read the selections throughout the week in preparation for each upcoming Advent service. There will be room to journal, draw, and reflect on your journey through the Advent season.

### ***Serving With You Today***

**Greeters:** Andrew DeBoer, Kathy and Gary Olsen

**Ushers:** Paul Davison, Colleen Czarnecki, Amy Rains, Jim McGlothlin, Richard Rowe, Doug Rubingh

**Communion Servers:** Pastor Darryl, Sally Lundquist, Patrick Coyle, Mark Jackson, Karen Kelly, Rosanne Holton, Luis Torres

**Audio/Video:** Sam Begay-Johnson, Kevin Arnett

**Flower Care:** Kathy Miller

## **Joys and Concerns**

**Keep Dave and Mary Tulos in your prayers.** Dave has been losing strength and has been admitted to a rehabilitation facility for support and evaluation. Send him some good cheer and encouragement to brighten his day. 730 Forest Hill Ave. SE, Apt 217, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

**Please keep Tom VandenBerg in your prayers.** He has been hospitalized for two weeks with complications from norovirus, including a torn esophagus, blood clots in his lungs and pneumonia. After several surgical procedures, he is slowly showing some improvement. He is in the intensive care unit at Butterworth and will be transferred to the acute rehab center at Blodgett once he is stable. Cards and well-wishes can be sent to Tom in care of Jennifer Hagemann, 289 Lloyd Court, Middleville, MI, 49333-8117.

Please pray for those navigating illness/treatment including: **Kathy Osborn & Tom Rysko, 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](mailto:dkistler@parkchurchgr.org).

## **All Is Calm, All is Bright by Joey Styron**

**Advent reflections for the LGBTQIA Community along with their friends and allies.  
Mondays in December at 7:00pm via Zoom**

This book discussion kicked off on November 30 and continues via Zoom at 7:00 PM on Mondays, December 8, 15 and 22. Need the meeting link? Email [office@parkchurchgr.org](mailto:office@parkchurchgr.org).

*All is Calm, All is Bright* is a series of four reflections - corresponding to the weeks of Advent. Joey invites us to ponder the angels' message: good tidings and great joy for all people. He weaves together sacred texts, carols, and portions of his own journal to share that God's love is for everyone, not a select few. The reflections are brief but inspiring and thought-provoking, respectful of your individual spirituality and religious wounds. Having survived the trauma of his own coming out and alienation from his beloved church, Joey encourages the thoughtful deconstruction and reconstruction of faith, ridding ourselves of all that is not love.

## ***The Sanctuary Flowers***

### **The flowers at the Pulpit**

In honor of Bob and Pam Nichols on their birthdays.

Given by their children and grandchildren.

If you would like to dedicate Sanctuary flowers, email Marcia Streeter. [mabiti1@gmail.com](mailto:mabiti1@gmail.com)

## **Christmas Offering**

### **Community and Service Center**

**ongoing through December 31**

The Park Church Christmas Offering takes place every December and benefits one or more organizations selected by the Park Church Mission Committee.

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, welcome, and to be a place to set down burdens, rest, and share a meal. It is a service center connecting clients with essential services like securing safe housing, medical referrals, employment, assistance with paperwork, and much more. 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 supported by volunteers, donors, churches, businesses, and neighbors, with professional staffing and an independent board of directors. Thank you for your tremendous generosity and care for our neighbors. You can make your contribution by clicking on the QR code or by using one of the designated envelopes in the Narthex. Thank you for your generous support of the 2025 Christmas Offering.

**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.



## **Palmer School Night of Giving (NOG)**

**December 9 at 4:00pm**

Night of Giving 2025 will be held on December 9, 2025 at 4pm. The event will be held in the school playground area, weather permitting or in the gym if necessary. We will set up outside at 3:00, with a 4pm start. Please contact Sara Haines at 616.560.4756 if you are interested in volunteering on December 9, or can help organize & assemble items for the family bags prior to December 9. We will be working out of the Parlor. Feel free to stop in and say hello and see what NOG is all about.

Blessings, Sara Haines

## **The “Sow and Sews”: Sowing with kindness, Sewing with purpose**

**Thursday, December 11 at 1:00pm**

The Park Church Sow and Sews make bags for the mobile food pantry, wound and dental kits for Cherry Health and emergency menstrual kits. We meet the second Thursday of each month from 1:00 – 3:00 in Spindler Dining Room. Bring your sewing machine, scissors, iron or rotary cutters but most importantly bring yourself to find out how you can be involved! No experience required. Any questions, ask Terrie thunter@parkchurchgr.org.

## **Santa Claus Girls**

**Saturday, December 13**

**Please Note: There is a particular need for drivers this year.**

Did you know that Santa Claus Girls was founded right here at Park Church in 1908? Let's honor that heritage and support the Santa Claus Girls of today! There are two opportunities for Park people to serve the children that Santa Claus Girls serves.

**December 13:** Be a driver and deliver gift bags to the children's homes or be a loader and help fill up the delivery cars. Drivers are assigned to a 30 minute queue during which the presents will be loaded for a 12 - 14 house route in the greater Grand Rapids area. Loaders will gather at 7:30 at the DeltaPlex and carry organized batches of gift bags to assigned vehicles. The Park Church Youth Group will be involved with loading. They would love to have you join them! To volunteer, fill out the registration form at [www.santaclausgirls.org/volunteer](http://www.santaclausgirls.org/volunteer).

**Monetary donations.** Santa Claus Girls is an entirely volunteer run organization. Donations enable the purchase of each years' gifts for the children and pay the occupancy expenses for the large warehouse and storage facilities necessary to operate efficiently and safely.

## **Candlelight Christmas: *Wander in Wonder***

**Sunday, December 14 at 4:30**

Join us for the 108th Annual Candlelight Christmas at 4:30pm on Sunday, December 14. All of the Park Church music ensembles joined by our string and brass musicians-in-residence participate. The public is warmly invited (there is no charge) and parking is free in our lot and on the surrounding streets while space is available. There will be an opportunity to contribute to the Park Church Christmas Offering during this service. A cookie reception will follow.

### **Calling all cookie monsters!**

**Ongoing through December 14**

We need cookies for the reception for the Candlelight Service on December 14. If you are able, please make 2 dozen cookies and bring them to the morning service or, if they can be refrigerated or frozen, drop them off ahead of time. Mark your contributions "Candlelight".

### **It's time again to order Christmas poinsettias!**

These are six-inch red poinsettias with a green foil pot cover. You may place your order by calling the church office (459-3203), by emailing [mbutler@parkchurchgr.org](mailto:mbutler@parkchurchgr.org), or by visiting the P.O.P. table downstairs after worship on December 7 to order in person. The cost is \$8.00 each. Order forms will also be available on the tables in the narthex. Please be sure to designate if the plant is in memory or in honor of your loved one. Poinsettias will be on display in the Sanctuary on Sunday, December 21 and may be taken home with you after the service that day or after either of the Christmas Eve services. The deadline to order is December 16.

## **Annual Cocoa and Piñata Party**

**Sunday, December 21 after morning worship**

The youth are hosting a church-wide celebration on December 21 following the morning worship service. Please plan to stay for some cocoa, fellowship...and to take a whack at a piñata. You can help out by donating CANDY! Leftover Halloween candy is just perfect and can be left in Peter's office anytime.

### **Christmas Worship Service Schedule**

Candlelight Christmas Service: Sunday, December 14 at 4:30pm

Children's Christmas Pageant: Sunday, December 21 at 10:30am

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

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

**This Week at Park Church**

- Mon. Dec. 8 at 7:00pm All is Calm, All is Bright Advent devotional discussion group
- Tues. Dec. 9 at 6:30pm Board of Trustees meeting
- Wed. Dec. 10 at 10:00am Park Church Women board meeting  
at 7:00pm Bible Study Book of Luke in person or online
- Thurs. Dec. 11 at 8:30am Men's Discussion Group  
at 1:00pm Sow and Sews work day  
at 6:00pm Jubiloso! rehearsal  
at 7:00pm West Michigan Survivors of Suicide Loss support group  
at 7:30pm Chancel Choir rehearsal
- Sat. Dec. 13 at 8:00am Candlelight Christmas rehearsals
- Sun. Dec. 14 at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship - Third Sunday of Advent  
Coffee Fellowship before and after worship in Merriam Hall  
Pick up your copy of the Park Church Advent Devotional for the week  
at 4:30pm Wander in Wonder: the 108th Candlelight Christmas Service



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             | pcoyle@parkchurchgr.org      |
| Peter Smith, Spiritual Formation & Education Minister | psmith@parkchurchgr.org      |
| Terrie Hunter, Congregational Life Coordinator        | thunter@parkchurchgr.org     |
| Julie Anderson, Finance Director                      | janderson@parkchurchgr.org   |
| Camille DeBoer, Communications Coordinator            | cdeboer@parkchurchgr.org     |
| Tim Persenaire, Lead Custodian                        | tpersenaire@parkchurchgr.org |
| Marty Butler, Parish Life Assistant                   | mbutler@parkchurchgr.org     |
| Judi Stroh, Office Administrator & Event Coordinator  | jstroh@parkchurchgr.org      |

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

10 E Park Pl. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-459-3203

office@parkchurchgr.org

www.parkchurchgr.org

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.