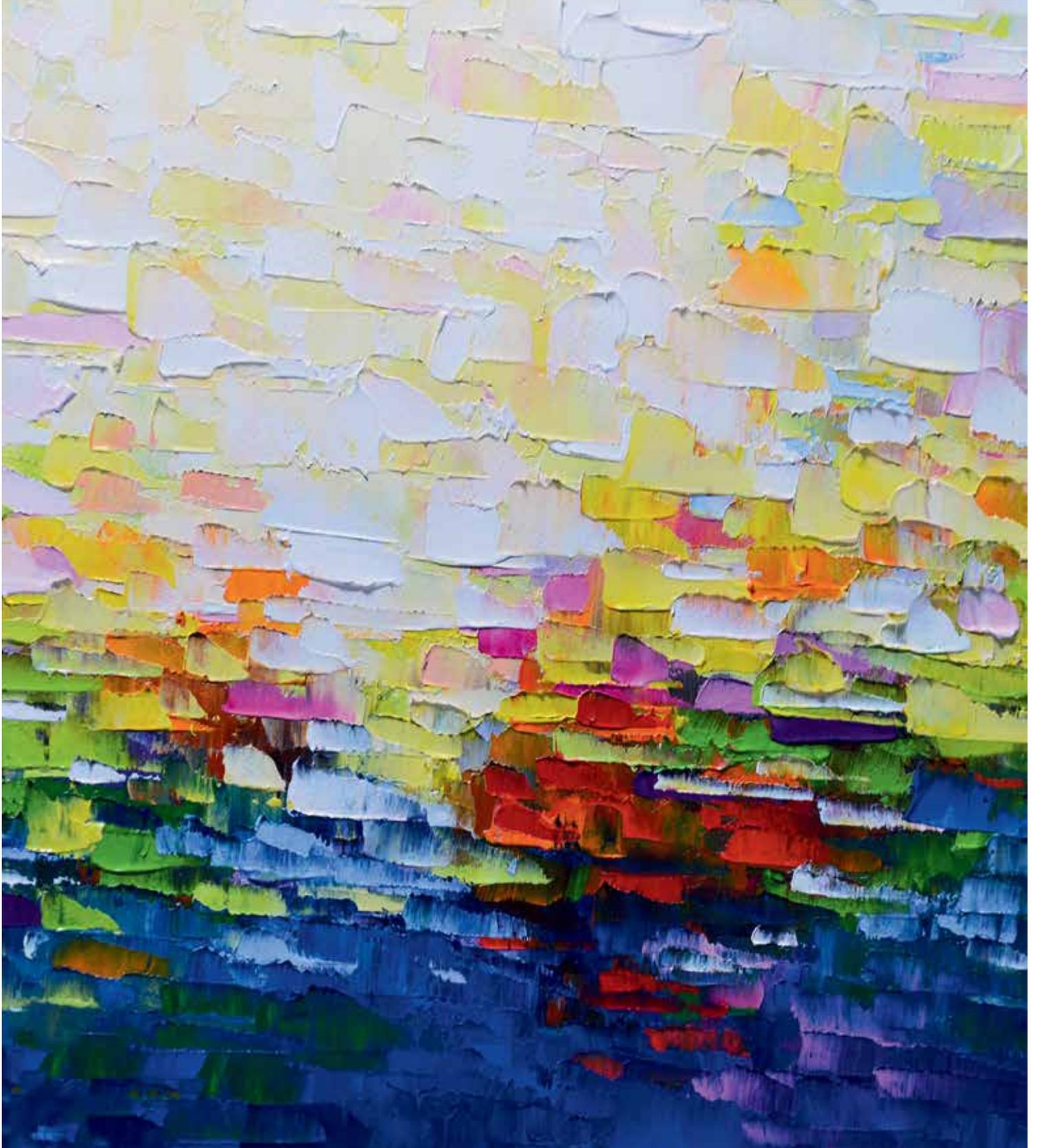


First (Park) Congregational Church

Sunday, November 30, 2025

The First Sunday of Advent: **Hope**



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: *Doxology*, Mike Moyers, 2013 (used with permission)



Click the QR code for the current Congregationalist.

Order of Worship for November 30, 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

*The Chimes give us an opportunity to center ourselves as we
prepare our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to receive the message God has for us.*

Prelude

Steven B. Smith, organ
Prelude on "Valet Will Ich Dir Geben"
Paul Manz

+ Prayer of Invocation

Reading Responsively
Tim Kroll, liturgist

One: God of Hope, be present with us this day.

Breathe on us your breath, your spirit, your energy, your enlivening, your imagination.

All: Wake us up;

Lift our souls;

Soften our hearts;

That we might feel;

That we might trust;

That we might grieve;

That we might dream;

That we might follow your Son and enter your extraordinary kin-dom!

Amen.

1 O Lord, how shall I meet you, how wel-come you a - right?
2 Love caused your in - car - na - tion; love brought you down to me;
3 You come, O Lord, with glad - ness, in mer - cy and good-will,

Your peo - ple long to greet you, my hope, my heart's de - light!
your thirst for my sal - va - tion pro-cured my lib - er - ty.
to bring an end to sad - ness and bid our fears be still.

O kin - dle, Lord most ho - ly, a lamp with - in my breast,
O love be - yond all tell - ing, that led you to em - brace
In pa - tient ex - pec - ta - tion we live for that great day

to do in spir - it low - ly all that may please you best.
in love, all loves ex - cel - ling, our lost and fal - len race.
when your re - newed cre - a - tion your glo - ry shall dis - play.

Today, we light the candle of Hope. We think of Hope as anticipation of something future, but in truth, Hope is the incarnation of trust. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, while in prison, said: "The celebration of Advent is possible only to those troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come."

Many of our sacred scriptures speak of pain and hurt and tears...but they also speak of Hope in God. So, as we begin our journey through Advent, let us ponder: How are you or those you love troubled in soul or fearful? And yet, where does your Hope lie, and in whom do you place your trust?

Today, we lift a prayer of Advent Hope using the words of the great poet of the Hebrew Bible, found in Psalm 71,

One: "In you, O Lord, I take refuge;
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me.

All: **For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O Lord, from my youth."**
Amen.

Advent Response

When God is a Child

Brian Wren, Joan Collier Fogg, arr. Patrick Coyle

1. Hope is a star that shines in the night,
5 lead - ing us on till the morn - ing is bright. When
9 God is a child there's hope in our song. The
13 last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and
17 none shall be a - fraid.

Prayers of the People and Our Savior's Prayer

concluding, the congregation prays in unison (continued...)

...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.

Advent Prayer Response

The Chancel Choir

Prepare!

Joseph M. Martin

*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!*

Scripture Reading

Psalm 122

Tim Kroll, liturgist

I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
For there the thrones for judgment were set up,
the thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls
and security within your towers.”
For the sake of my relatives and friends

I will say, "Peace be within you."
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.

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

All: Thanks be to God.

Solo

Paula Tibbe, soprano

Mid-winter

Bob Chilcotte

*In the bleak mid-winter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter long ago.*

*Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter a stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.*

*Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air.
But only His mother in her maiden bliss
Worshipped the Beloved with a kiss.*

*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.*

Sermon: *Hope: A Wellspring of Dreams*

Pastor Darryl

Meditation

Steven B. Smith, organ
Meditation on "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You"
Paul Manz

Invitation to Generosity and Stewardship

Offertory Music

The Chancel Choir
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
Arr. Dan Forrest

(For text, see hymn 82.)

+ 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: For the wondrous ways this offering breathes hope into this community, for the ways it will help us live out our vision to “build a community of relentless compassion and courageous hope,” we pray ...

All: **Bless these gifts, O God, that they may be tools of grace and hope. Use them to bear witness to your boundless mercy and steadfast love. Use us to bear witness to your Good News of peace on earth. Amen.**

+ Hymn - No. 94

Now The Heavens Start to Whisper
Tune: JEFFERSON

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Now The Heavens Start to Whisper'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is written in the bass clef. Below the treble clef staff, there are three lines of lyrics, each starting with a number (1, 2, 3) and corresponding to the notes above. The lyrics are: '1 Now the heav - ens start to whis - per, as the veil is', '2 Heav - y clouds that block the moon - light now be - gin to', and '3 Christ, e - ter - nal Sun of jus - tice, Christ, the rose of'.

grow - ing thin. Earth from slum - ber wakes to lis - ten
 drift a - way. Dia - mond bril - liance through the dark - ness
 wis - dom's seed, come to bless with fire and fra - grance

to the stir - ring, faint with - in: seed of prom - ise, deep - ly
 shines the hope of com - ing day. Christ, the morn - ing star of
 hours of yearn - ing, hurt, and need. In the lone - ly, in the

plant - ed, child to spring from Jes - se's stem! Like the soil be -
 splen - dor, gleams with - in a world grown dim. Heav - en's em - ber
 strang - er, in the out - cast, hid from view: child who comes to

neath the frost - line, hearts grow soft to wel - come him.
 fans to full - ness; hearts grow warm to wel - come him.
 grace the man - ger, teach our hearts to wel - come you.

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 This Day, Earth Shall Ring!
John Behnke

Advent @ the P.O.P. Table

Pick up your very own personal Park Church Advent Devotional each week starting today!. 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.

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 the week

11:45 All is Calm, All is Bright discussion with author Joey Styron

11:45am Melodia/Camerata rehearsals

Serving With You Today

Greeters: Rob Campbell, Jack Boss

Ushers: Mike Mitchell, Jan Edwards, Jeff Liggett, Janet Mitchell, Gary VanderHeiden, Bob Wolford

Audio/Video: Bruce Robey, Camille DeBoer, Andrew DeBoer

Flower Care: Kathy Miller

The Sanctuary Flowers

The flowers at the Pulpit
In memory of Carroll and Frances Streeter.
Given by Bill and Marcia Streeter.

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

Joys and Concerns

I have only been a member of Park Church for about 3 years, so I was overwhelmed with the cards and wishes I received from Park Church members after my recent surgery. Thank you for the get-well wishes and your prayers. It truly is a Park Church Family! **Pat Schaub**

Dan Pettee has come home from the hospital to continue his recovery. Please send your get well wishes to him at 5972 E Lyn Haven Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512.

Annie Hager fell and fractured her elbow. Send your encouragement and best wishes for a quick recovery to her at 2510 Lake Michigan Dr. NW, Apt A315, G R mi 49504

Nancy Miller is a member of Jubilosio! Her father Clifford Beckman lives in Illinois and has been placed on a ventilator for pneumonia. Send cards and prayers for healing to Nancy at 4601 Deerhaven Park Dr. Lowell, MI 49331

Kathy Osborn is a member of the Chancel Choir. Kathy's husband **Tom Rysko** has suffered a traumatic medical event and is facing a complicated recovery. Please send your love and support to Kathy and Tom at 3530 Water Walk Dr. SW, Grandville, MI 49418.

Please pray for those navigating illness/treatment including: **Ron Bickel, Marcia Bishop, Doug Gammage, Ruth McCarty, and Tom VandenBosch**

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

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

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

Advent reflections for the LGBTQIA Community along with their friends and allies.

TODAY after worship

Joey Styron has published the Advent devotional you didn't know you needed and he is with us today to talk about it! The kickoff for this study will take place after worship in the Spindler Dining Room and will include lunch. Joey will be joining us. There are some seats available, so please join us if you can.

Following this session, the group will meet via Zoom at 7:00 PM on Mondays, December 1, 8, 15 and 22. The Zoom link will be sent to you by email.

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.

Books will be distributed free of charge to series participants today. If you are not participating in the series but would like to purchase a copy of the book as a gift or for your own study, please contact the main office at office@parkchurchgr.org or 616-459-3203.

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".

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.

Park Throughout the Holidays Dinner
Friday, December 5 at 6:00 PM in Merriam Hall.

Come celebrate 190 years of Christmas at Park Church at a church-wide holiday dinner on Friday, December 5. You will enjoy fellowship with your Park Church friends over a delicious gourmet dinner, special entertainment, and presentations on the various ways Park Church has made Christmas a special time of year. You will also have the opportunity to support this year's Christmas Offering recipient, the new Grand Rapids Community and Service Center.

The dinner is \$25.00 per person and reservations are due by December 2. The price covers the event related costs. Attendees are invited to bring a bottle of wine or beer for themselves to drink during dinner. (please consume alcohol responsibly). Reserve your place(s) by contacting Marty Butler by email at mbutler@parkchurchgr.org, or by phone at 616-459-3203. Payment for the dinner can be made by using the QR code below, by check (please put Holiday Dinner in the memo line) or by cash using an offering envelope. If this event is cost-prohibitive for you at the moment, please contact Pastor Darryl about sliding scale options.



Attendees are invited to bring a beloved Nativity set or Creche to display that evening in Merriam Hall during the dinner. Please circle the date and join us for this festive evening!

Cookie Walk and BBQ Lunch
Sunday, December 7 after worship

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). You KNOW how talented the Park Church resident bakers are, so start saving those nickels and dimes and kick off your holiday celebrations a little early with some delicious Christmas cookies.

It's time again to order Christmas poinsettias!

These are six-inch red poinsettias with a green foil pot cover available for \$8.00 each. You may place your order by calling the church office (459-3203), by emailing mbutler@parkchurchgr.org, or by visiting the P.O.P. table downstairs after worship today or December 7 to order in person. 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.

Palmer School Night of Giving (NOG)

December 9 at 4:00pm

Night of Giving 2025 will be held on December 9, 2025 at 4:00pm. We will set up outside Palmer School at 3:00. 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 in Martenson Parlor. Feel free to stop in and say hello and see what NOG is all about.

NOG 2025 Wish List:

- Drivers to help transport NOG bags and other items to Palmer on December 9
- Girls & boys underwear all sizes and Waterproof winter Gloves & Mittens
- Personal Care Items; soap, shampoo, misc personal care items
- Unused new toys
- Perishable Fruits & Vegetables i.e. Potatoes, Apples, Oranges etc.
- Home Goods Style Large Shopping Bags - new
- Reusable Grocery Bags (Meijer or Aldi) and Quart & Gallon zip lock bags

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. Or you can be a loader. 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.

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 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. Thank you for your generous support of the 2025 Christmas Offering.

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.

You can make a monetary donation using the designated envelope in the Narthex (or mark your check "Christmas Offering") or by using the QR code on the back of bulletin and selecting "Christmas Offering".

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

- Tues. Dec. 2 at 12:15pm Music at Midday Caledonia Choralaires
at 6:30pm Board of Deacons meeting
- Wed. Dec. 3 at 7:00pm Bible Study Book of Luke in person or online
- Thurs. Dec. 4 at 8:30am Men's Discussion Group
at 6:00pm Jubiloso! rehearsal
at 7:30pm Chancel Choir rehearsal
- Fri. Dec. 5 at 6:00pm *Christmas Through the Years 190th Anniversary Dinner*
- Sun. Dec 7 at 10:30am Sanctuary Worship - Second Sunday of Advent - Communion
Coffee Fellowship before and after worship
P.O.P Table Holiday Poinsettia information and orders
Pick up your copy of the Park Church Advent Devotional for the week
Cookie Walk and BBQ Luncheon after worship in Merriam Hall
11:45am Melodia/Camerata rehearsals
11:45am Youth Group meeting



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 | 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.